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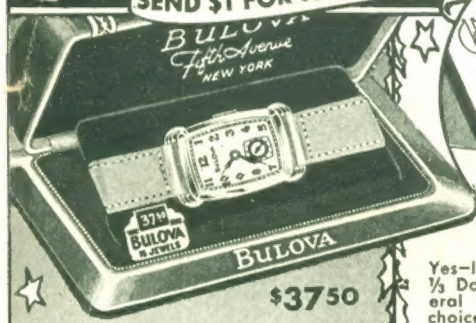

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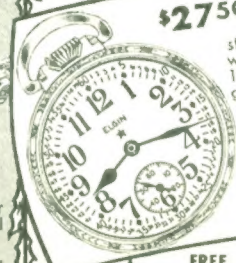

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Vol. 108, No. 2 for December, 1942 Best of New Stories

Commando's Creed (a novelette) . . . . . JAMES NORMAN 10
Davie Coster had fought with the International Brigades all through the Civil War and knew Spain like a native, so his one-man invasion of the old battle ground should have been duck soup. He was a natural to handle this job which ordinary diplomatic channels couldn't touch. But now, caught in the web of Falangist, Gestapo and Guardia Civil, his secret mission to the Republican guerrillas was panning out to be anything but a fiesta.

Goose Load . . . . . HAROLD TITUS 44
Those city sports may have been able to get their geese with only duck loads in their guns, but it was sure a goose load under young Hoddy's mop of red hair that helped him figure out for the G-men the answer to the murder riddle.

Seasoned in Sail . . . . . ROLLAND LYNCH 56
"The Maritime Commission must be stark mad!" roared Captain Corrigan. "Sending me a shellback out of sail for a mate and the *Bering* without enough canvas on her to diaper a baby." But Hildreth, whose last ship had been the clipper *Valkyrie*, figured the sea's always the same, sail or steam—and damned if he hadn't figured right.

Devil Dogs of Dixie (a fact story) . . . . . H. G. RUSSELL 65
Meet the Confederate States Marine Corps—as tough a bunch of leathernecks as ever landed to get a situation in hand.

Hill-Country 'Coon . . . . . FRED GIPSON 72
It seemed like every time Ed jumped a 'coon he wound up in the river—horse, hounds and all—and his partner Buck had to fish him out. What made that cowboy swear hardest, though, was to discover it was the same 'coon that half-drowned him each time he went hunting.

To the Last Man (2nd part of 3) . . . . . WILLIAM E. BARRETT 78
Craig Archer and his gallant band of American backwoods fighters offer their services to O'Higgins and his amazing Army of the Andes, only to be told that there is no place for mercenaries in South America. His counter-offer to clean the mountain passes of Indians is accepted, however, and they ride forth to the work they love and know best.

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Cover painted for Adventure by Leslie A. Ross

Kenneth S. White, Editor

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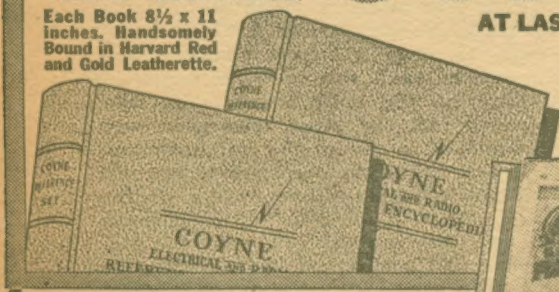

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MARINES in gray.

Request:—Recently, in reading an old volume on the American Civil War, I ran across a footnote which referred briefly to the Confederate Marine Corps. I had never heard of the organization and have never run across any other mention of it, except in that one little note. Can you tell me anything about its history? How it was recruited? What action the Corps saw and where? What was its strength and how was it officered?

—J. Burdick,
Westport, Conn.

The above query came to us just at the time we were going to press with H. G. Russell's article "Devil Dogs of Dixie" (see page 65, this issue) so instead of passing it along to Major F. W. Hopkins, our regular *A. A.* expert on the Marine Corps, now on active duty, of course, we turned it over to Russell, knowing that the details would be fresh in his mind and that he'd have some additional material at his fingertips without having to do any research. He shot back the following for Reader Burdick's benefit.

I am delighted to be able to answer Mr. Burdick's letter, both in my article and below. And it's not surprising that he has never run across but one reference to the Confederate Marines.

I've been a student of Civil War history for years and when I first encountered a reference to the Confederate Marines in an old volume long out of print, I was thrilled but not surprised to find that such a Corps had been in the service of the South. It was more difficult for the Confederates to recruit sailors, as men with actual experience as seamen were relatively few in the southern states. Many times during their service the veteran marines in the Confederate Corps were called upon to perform the duties of seamen when the skipper became shorthanded. The ability to do this, their superior discipline, and their fighting qualities showed them to be true and tried leathernecks.

I began to chase my newly found gray clad marines through the pages of old Civil War accounts. With the aid of a rare-book-selling friend I obtained access to many a forgotten volume; but nowhere was I able to find a connected story on the outfit longer than four pages. All the other references were contained in paragraphs and sentences. It was frequently necessary to examine a book on naval history, read a chapter searchingly to discover in a sentence or even a phrase that the Confederate Marines had landed and had the situation well in hand. I put the pieces together, much as one would a jigsaw puzzle. Eventually I had material enough to write about 10,000 words on the subject. My investigation of the Confederate Marines has not ended. Further research may reveal a great deal more. But it is easy to see that volumes that might have been written have perished with the last surviving members of that gallant Corps.

Here are some details on the organization and composition of the Corps as originally planned. The Act of March 16, 1861 contemplated a total of six line companies, each having 1 captain, 1 first lieutenant, 1 second lieutenant, 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, 100 privates, and 10 musicians. This would provide for a company of two platoons, of fifty-four men commanded by a lieutenant. With enough sergeants to provide right and left guides, the outfit seems woefully short of corporals. The musicians were fifers and drummers, five of each. These six companies of 121 officers and men were to be commanded by a major commandant, whose staff was to consist of three commissioned officers and two noncommissioned officers, providing him with an adjutant, a quartermaster, a paymaster, a sergeant-major, and a quartermaster-sergeant.

By the time the Corps was actually

(Continued on page 8)

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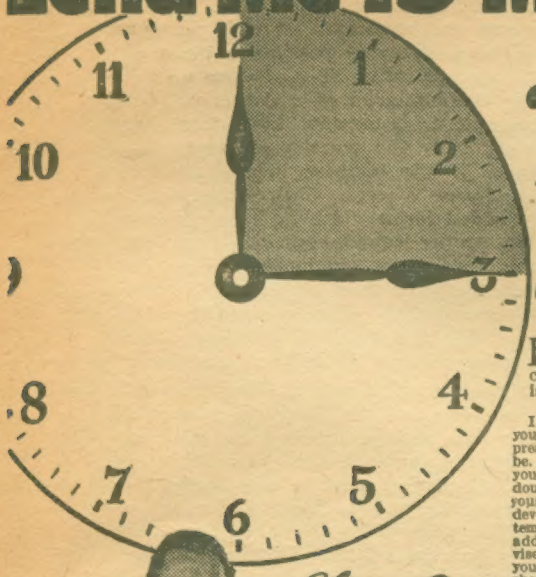

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(Continued from page 6)

organized the Act of May 20, 1861 changed the setup to ten line companies of 98 officers and men, which was nearer the strength of the new Civil War company. The new plan called for a captain, a first lieutenant, 2 second lieutenants, 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, 84 privates and 2 musicians. The change gave the company a second-in-command, slightly smaller platoons and much less music. The staff organization was not greatly changed, although the officers were raised in rank, the commandant being named a colonel, assisted by a lieutenant-colonel, who acted as executive officer and chief-of-staff, and adjutant, a quartermaster, a paymaster, all of whom had the rank of major, and a sergeant-major and a quartermaster-sergeant.

Lack of adequate staff facilities was one of the chief defects of military organization during the Civil War. The Confederate Marines were little different from other outfits in this respect. This staff organization remained intact for the duration with the addition of a second lieutenant as assistant quartermaster. Headquarters was maintained in Richmond. A further change was made in the organization and composition of the ten line companies by the amended Act of September 24, 1862, when sergeants, corporals, and musicians were increased to six of each rating. This increase in non-commissioned personnel would have made possible a three platoon organization of thirty-two men under the command of a lieutenant, total strength of company, 106 officers and men. Note the scarcity of corporals in spite of the increase in the non-commissioned officers. Twice the number provided for would have been necessary for proper squad control. Apparently there was only one major whose duty was that of a field officer and battalion commander, the other companies not included in the one field battalion did not require officers higher than captains.

The roster below will show that while the officers of the Corps in general advanced a rank or two in the Confederate service, opportunities for promotion were not nearly as great in the Confederate Marine Corps or in the Confederate Navy as they were in the army. For example, it will be recalled that Stonewall Jackson held no higher rank than that of major of artillery when he resigned from the United States Army before the war. He was a lieutenant general when he died at 39. General Lee had been a colonel, and on the Union side both Grant and McClellan had held no higher pre-war rank than that of captain. Many officers

(Continued on page 129)

NAME	STATE	RANK IN C.S.M.C. 1864	RANK IN U.S.M.C. 1861
H. B. Tyler	Va.	lieut. col. (exec. off.)	maj. (adjutant)
G. H. Terrette	Va.	maj. (field officer)	capt. & brev. maj.
I. Greene	Va.	maj. (adjutant)	1st lieut.
A. S. Taylor	Va.	maj. (quartermaster)	capt.
J. D. Simms	Va.	captain (act. major)	capt.
J. F. R. Tatnall	Ga.	capt.	1st lieut.
A. J. Hayes	Ala.	capt.	1st lieut.
G. Holmes	Fla.	capt.	2nd lieut.
J. E. Meire	Md.	capt.	1st lieut.
T. S. Wilson	Mo.	capt.	1st lieut.
C. L. Sayre	Ala.	1st lieut.	2nd lieut.
B. K. Howell	Miss.	1st lieut.	2nd lieut.

Colonel L. J. Beall, commandant, of Virginia was a former U. S. Army officer. Major R. T. Allison, paymaster, of Kentucky and Maryland was a former paymaster of equivalent rank in the U. S. Navy.

Other officers in the Confederate States Marine Corps, most of whom were appointed from civil life were the following.

Captains R. T. Thom and A. C. VanBenthuysen; First Lieutenants R. H. Henderson, D. G. Raney, J. R. Y. Fendall, T. P. Gwynn, J. Thurston, F. H. Cameron, F. MacRee; Second Lieutenants D. Bradford, N. E. Venable (assistant quartermaster), H. L. Graves, H. M. Doak, A. S. Berry, E. F. Neuville, D. G. Brent, J. C. Murdoch, S. M. Roberts, and J. L. Rapier.

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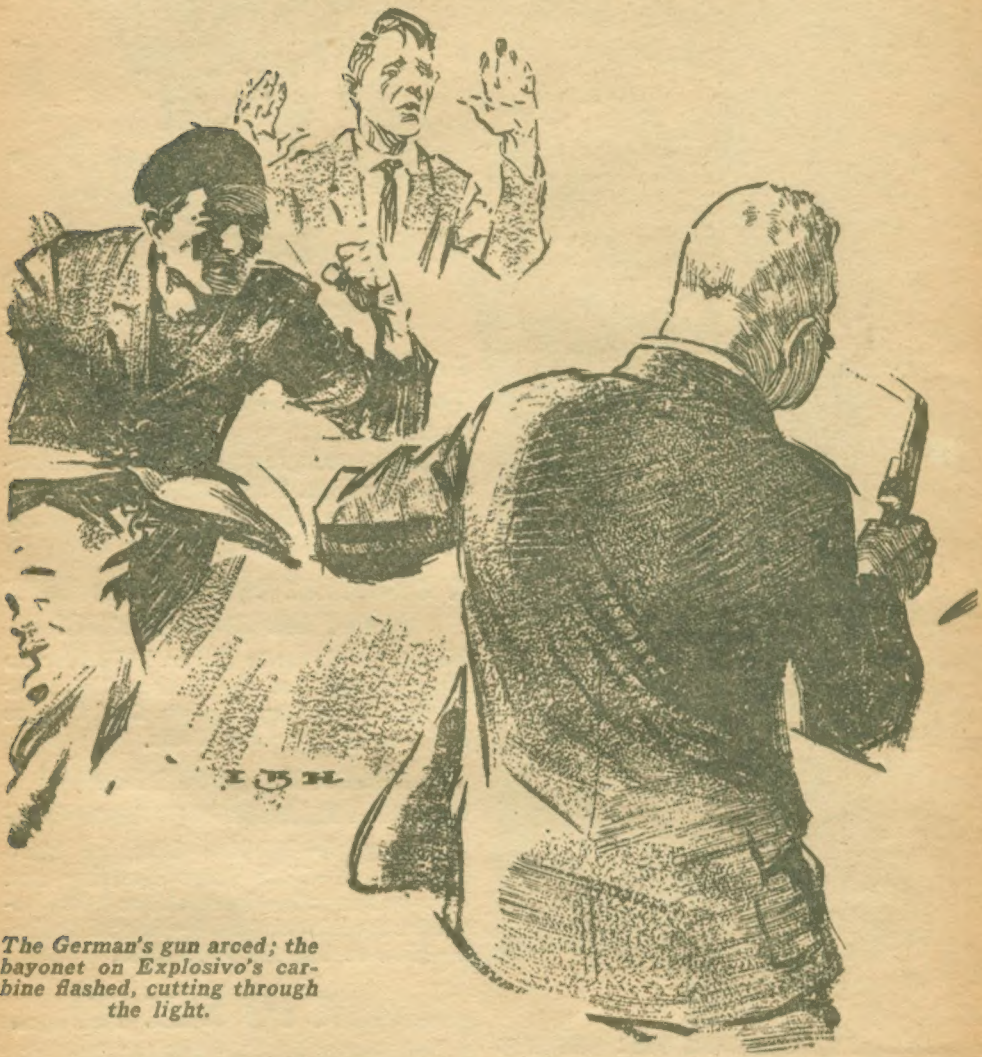
COMMANDO'S CREED

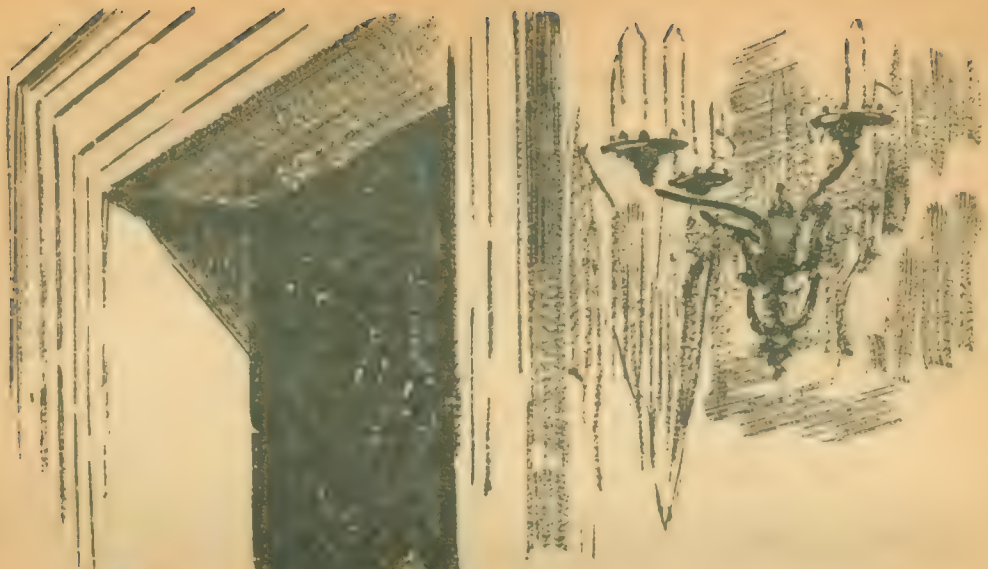
By JAMES NORMAN



The German's gun arced; the bayonet on Explosivo's carbine flashed, cutting through the light.

FROM the moment he came out of the sea and crossed the strip of beach near Denia, he sensed the latent violence, the impulse to murder, which had spread across the face of the land. It had seeped down deeply beneath the skin of Spain; beneath tilled red fields; within silent whitewashed houses and under the gaunt mountain shoulder of Point Mongó which rose in the distance on his left and rubbed a fistful of stars from the sky.

Burying the collapsible rubber raft beneath the high collar of land fringing

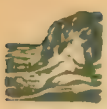


ILLUSTRATED BY I. B. HAZELTON

the beach, he now glanced back toward the dark spread of the Mediterranean as though expecting still to see the British submarine which had carried him this far. He knew it was gone. It had to be, though it left him with a queer emptiness. Turning to the dune ahead, his mind and senses were again alert to the vague forms in the night. His face was stoically inexpressive, the countenance of a man who looks as if he has given up safety for danger. He tilted his head forward toward the darkness as though measuring danger, feeling out its weaknesses. A group of palms raised dimly against the sky. Davie Coster was satisfied that he recognized them after all these years and he took his bearings by them. Moving cautiously, he climbed the dune and saw a few lights glowing in the distance, somewhere below the old castle overlooking the town of Denia.

A strong sense of nostalgia cut through his thoughts as they reached back into the months of the Civil War when he had rested at the International Brigade hospital just beyond the town. He knew every inch of the town: the plane trees bordering the Loreto, rustling crisply . . . Café El Forno darkened . . . Drinking at the Comercio . . . In those days the tiny port had been gutted by bombs and the burned-out skeleton of a French freighter had tilted drunkenly in the harbor . . . .

He shook the thoughts of Denia from his mind, fighting down the strong desire to relax a little, to enjoy his memories. His lips tightened and he frowned. This was no time to go soft. He was faced with a job to be done and it was too dangerous to relax. His job would begin on the narrow road that skirted the sea, this side of Denia. It would begin with Nuñez the Valencian. He found the goat path that went from the seashore to intersect the road where Nuñez lived.



AS HE hurried through the night, his body molding into shadows as a body does when it has been trained in the precise school of the Commandos, his features remained blunt with the satisfaction that he was returning to Spain in this way. He understood the things which had made his return possible. The shape of his face, which carried more of the stripped-down leanness of the Aragonese mountaineers than the look of an Englishman, had been one factor. His ability to think in Spanish was another. And his record—the years of fighting in Spain, his work with the Republicans and his familiarity with the Fascist-controlled radio station at Aranjuez had been decisive.

But most important in bringing him back was the Allied Second Front. Spain was loaded heavily with the wrong people. Word had seeped into London that Nazi and Fascist troops were in Spain, still trying to wipe out Republican guerrilla bands who had backed into the mountains of Asturia, Rio Tinto and Cuenca and had refused to surrender after the Civil War. London needed to know the strength of these Nazi forces in Spain and how many would be thrust against Gibraltar or shunted toward the Allied flanks on the day that English and Americans fought for a foothold on the Continent.

It was Davie Coster's job to locate this information, put it together and broadcast the exact details to London. He had counted on having more time but delays on the submarine had left him only three days.

The pattern of his mission was imbedded in his mind, each step as it would carry him toward the Aranjuez radio. The pattern began with Nuñez who had been in contact with Republicans exiled in London. He remembered the frail, ferocious peasant fighter from the war. He recalled how the man had always described himself as *muy Republicano*. Davie smiled thoughtfully. There was no saying how Republican Nuñez had been. He remembered how the Valencian had always given the clenched-fist, Republican salute with his right hand instead of his left.

Now, holding to the edge of the goat trail, Davie's attention ran ahead through the darkness, feeling and working out the shadows. On his left he passed an onion field. He still remembered that, and the dry tart smell it brought back. Finally he came to the road. There was no moon and shadows grouped thickly about Nuñez's silent, whitewashed house across the way.

He slipped into the shadows and tapped against a window shutter. Suddenly the shutter opened a fraction and a blade of light slashed across his face.

"*Quién es?*" a voice asked, harshly.

He grabbed the shutter. "Nuñez?" Then he glimpsed the face behind the shutter. A woman's face, the wife of Nuñez.

"*Inglés!*" he heard her gasp. The oblong of light vanished abruptly. Davie listened to the scraping footsteps inside, then heard the house door unbarred.

A RUDE lamp made of a wick floating idly in a cup of olive oil flickered upon the table. Its weak light barely touched the walls of the room as Davie's glance swept over the hard, earth floor and the stubby legged Spanish chairs before returning to the woman. The house had not changed in three years, but Teresa had. Her black hair had gone ragged and the flesh of her cheeks hung in loops beneath her flavorless eyes. She was a woman who should look forty but seemed sixty.

"You look tired, Teresa," Coster said. He let his gaze move back across the room while his senses measured its shape and character. He remembered that during the war in Spain one could feel the atmosphere in a house; whether it was Republican, Monarchist or hiding Fascism. Somehow, he didn't like the feel of this room.

He stared at the woman again. Now he recognized it. Teresa had become hard. The coldness in her eyes showed it, and it left him uneasy. "Where is Nuñez?" he asked.

The woman's eyes met Coster's. There wasn't any expression in them, nor in her voice. "He has gone," she said. "Albacete. He will return in a week."

"He is well?"

"Yes."

Davie frowned. "Nuñez expected me," he said. "Did he leave something?"

The old woman went to the cupboard and took an earthen jug from the shelf. She returned, drawing papers from the jug and gave them to Davie who examined them: first, the *salvo conducto* or military safe conduct papers for the railway trip from Denia to Valencia, then, the card of identity.

Both papers were made out for a Garcia Orgiva, but the description fitted Coster. He would now be Orgiva, as had been arranged by Nuñez. Teresa handed him a bundle of clothes which he took apart. As he put on the dusty black corduroy coat, the gray striped shirt and the tight fitting beret he felt again the urge to relax and enjoy his memories of Republican Spain. These were the clothes a man would wear while lying beneath an olive tree or while listening to a *flamenco* sung in some small *bodega*. But he had to wear them for a dangerous job.

Teresa watched him change. She saw him slip the papers into the pocket of the new clothes and also transfer the Spanish money he carried. She was studying him with a queer, considering intentness, a hardness rimming her eyes. "You do not carry a gun?" she asked.

Davie shook his head and smiled. "A gun makes one reckless," he said. He went to the door, held it open a little and peered into the darkness. "Are the *carbineros* on the road?"

"On the highway, but not on this road."

"Good." He shut the door a moment and glanced at the woman. There was still something wrong and he was puzzled. He sensed danger as he stared at her. "Has Nuñez explained why I am back in Spain?" he asked.

"No." He caught the stubborn line that crossed her mouth, then heard her say, "The *salvo* is for Valencia. Will you see *camaradas* there? Someone from the Underground?"

Coster's face stiffened. The word *camarada* jarred on his ear. It should not be strange, hearing Teresa use it. She was the wife of Nuñez; yet, there was something wrong with the way she said it. He could sense her trying to reach out, to find what he was doing in Spain. He could almost feel the strength of her will and the stubbornness.

At last, he opened the door. "I don't know whom I will see," he replied bluntly. "I have an address in my mind. That is all. *Salud*, Teresa."

LEIBLING was a squarish, comfortably built man with a mustache the shape of two well combed pennies on his upper lip. He wore a self-effacing black suit and a high, stiff celluloid collar three sizes too large for his neck. It was purposely that way, perhaps, to create an impression of ridiculousness, or to divert attention from his eyes which gave his character away. His eyes were like brown, impersonal thumbprints which had a habit of reaching forth, planting themselves on someone and sticking there like postage stamps. Liebling was one of those *señores* known in Spain as the Gestapo.

A telephone had rung in his room in Denia's Hotel Comercia just before dawn. Before switching on the room lights and dressing, he had carefully drawn the shutters. Señor Leibling had learned a thing or two in Spain.

Now, as he sat in a reed chair, rubbing a little oil in his mustache, he stared at his visitor, Teresa Nuñez. He knew that he faced a blunt, hard-bargaining woman. She knew her mind and understood how to deal. She had come directly to him, instead of to the local Falangists, when she had exposed her husband as a Republican with connections in England. Her price had been high.

Señor Leibling decided to be tactful.

"The Englishman came at four o'clock and you gave him the papers as was arranged?" he asked. "Was there any suspicion about your husband not being there? No. The English are never suspicious. You will give me his name?"

Teresa shied and drew her lips down stubbornly. "You spoke of a thousand *pesetas*," she said.

"*Natürlich*, but the name?" Leibling nodded.

"Coster."

The German sighed, picked up a fat briefcase and brought forth some papers. His postage stamp eyes adhered to the neatly typed records.

"Coster, David," he read, half aloud. "*Freikampfer im Spanien.* British Battalion. Fought at Quinto, Belchite, Jarama. Released from army 1938. Worked with Republican Ministry of Propaganda, radio EAQ, Aranjuez. Now in British army . . ." Leibling set the paper down and pursed his lips carefully. "Aranjuez," he murmured. "*Sehr interessant.*"

"*Pues*—then, the thousand *pesetas*," Teresa repeated.

Leibling set the briefcase aside. "You have *pesetas* in the mind, woman," he snapped. "Let us think first about this Coster. Is he going to Valencia? Did he say that?"

Teresa's eyes lifted from the German's loose collar and stared at him. There was a hard enmity in the look. She remained silent.

"Who will he see there? He told you, didn't he? Or, was he suspicious?" Leibling continued.

"He did not tell me."

"You're lying." A fine emotionless edge had come into the German's voice. Then all at once, his tone became solicitous. "*Nein*, perhaps you do not lie. You merely imagine he is going to see someone." He rose, crossed to a reed table and filled a thin glass with cognac. He carried it back to the woman.

Teresa stared at him oddly, the sagging line holding on her mouth. "If I can find the name, will it pay well?" she asked. "Perhaps someone in the village, a *Republicano* would know it. They do not suspect about Nuñez. They might tell his wife."

Señor Leibling nodded slowly. He watched the woman lift the cognac glass to her nose, sniff it, then put it to her lips. Suddenly his hand lashed out, striking her across the cheek. The glass flew aside, shattered against the wall. Teresa stiffened in her chair. Her hand went to her cheek and a look of surprise crossed her face, then hatred fought from behind her eyes.

"Who does Coster visit?" Leibling demanded. "Give me the name. Quickly!"

His open hand struck again, rocking the woman's head. He stared down at her without emotion, his gaze merely calculating and impersonal. Suddenly, he turned and dragged a table before the woman. He began speaking with exaggerated preciseness, his voice cold and neutral. "*Bitte*—please spread your fingers on the table."

Teresa hesitated, dazed, then spread one hand. At once, she jerked it back. A look of terror filled her face when she saw Leibling draw his automatic and hold it by the barrel, hammer-wise.

"*Bitte*, the fingers, *señora*," Leibling repeated.

"No, *señor*," Teresa suddenly found her voice, "I will explain. The *Inglés* did not say where he was going but my husband, before he was shot, thought he would visit El Puñal in Valencia. This is something Nuñez told me."

Leibling's thumbprint eyes fastened upon the woman. He seemed surprised. "Puñal?" he said quickly. "Come, woman. He is not in Valencia."

Teresa nodded and the German saw that she was more frightened now than ever. And he understood, for she had betrayed the whereabouts of the man who led the Underground movement in Spain. A man as elusive as the quicksilver at Almaden.

"You know his address?"

Teresa shook her head.

The German glanced at his watch. It was six o'clock. The coastal train to Valencia left Denia in ten minutes and Señor Leibling felt thoroughly satisfied. Letting his eyes flick toward the woman once, he clapped his hands. A moment later a Civil Guard entered. Leibling nodded toward Teresa.

"Republican," he said. "She is to be shot."

CHAPTER II

EL PUNAL

THE sixty-five mile, narrow gauge railway which links Denia and Valencia misses half the towns along its route but somehow manages to pick up more

passengers than live in the area it serves. Peasants and soldiers cram the train compartments, ride the roof and even the steps. The train was already crowded when Davie Coster caught it at Oliva, just beyond Denia.

At first, it had felt like the old days, being on this crowded train. But the feeling spent itself quickly as he watched the remaining passengers in his compartment.

There were two old priests sleepily watching the dawn spread in the east. A *Guardia Civil*, one of the country's most hated police, sat beside the priests; and then, four wind-burned, sober peasants with their black, short smocks.

It had taken but a moment to sense that the hate which had spread over the land was now within the framework of this train. It showed in the mute, stubborn lines meshing the parchment colored faces of the farmers. It was in the air they breathed, and in every breath their barely moving lips and nostrils expelled. The hate seemed guided by the flash of an eye or the quickness of a remark against the *Guardia*. It was something Davie knew he could use when the time came.

The train rode westward for a brief stretch toward Carcagente, scudding beyond a backdrop of small gray mountains and into the heavy mists that hung over the flat coastal rice fields. Staring through the window, Davie watched an occasional town spring swiftly from the mist, then stand at stiff attention for a second before vanishing. The shape of the next towns began forming themselves in his mind—Carcagente, Alcira, Silla, then Valencia. After Valencia, Aranjuez.

When the train passed Silla the Civil Guard left the compartment. It was then that Davie noticed the squarishly built man with the black suit. The man walked by in the corridor, stared into the compartment, his flat gaze seeming to stamp approval or disapproval on the faces within.

Davie eyed the man, then shrugged away the feeling of tension that had clung to him since leaving Teresa. Soon, as he went on and approached Aranjuez, he knew that his whole body and mind would be keyed as they had been in the

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3. TWO EDGES double blade life. Marks indicated above identify edges, enabling you to give both equal use and get extra shaves
4. CLEAN BLADE in razor by loosening handle, then rinsing in hot water and shaking. Wiping the blade is likely to damage the edges

El Guardia Civil—Spain's Hated Police

moments before the sudden release and action of a Commando raid. With sharpness, he recalled the suspense, the draining off of nerves in that last raid at Saint Nazaire.

A minute later the man in the black suit reappeared and entered the compartment. Davie felt his nerves go taut as he stared at the man. His first impression was one of ridiculousness. He found himself fascinated by the stiff loose collar. It was like a halter around a very thin horse. But the man was not thin and he looked German.

The newcomer held an umbrella and a briefcase on his lap and he stared back at Davie pleasantly. He did nothing but stare until the train reached the outskirts of Valencia. When the train clattered over the switch-track approaches to the city and rattled on in the new, bright sunlight, the German became interested in the scenery.

Then, all at once, he turned to Davie, beaming eagerly. "How long does the train stop in Valencia?" he asked in an English so gentle it startled Coster.

Davie felt the quick, involuntary tightening about his mouth. He recognized the casualness of the bait. Had the German suspected him of being fool enough to reply in English? He froze inwardly, but managed to stare back with the blunt, puzzled expression of an Aragonese mountaineer. And he was thinking now that something must have happened to Nuñez. The papers he carried might be nothing more than a trap.

He waited, feeling the German's eyes upon him. After a moment, the German sighed, then shrugged and looked back at the houses of the city as they approached and surrounded the train.

DAVIE left the North Station and so did the German. He quickly realized that the man, for all his stockiness, knew how to walk and how to get through crowds. The man was never more than thirty feet away as they passed the Plaza de Toros, then took a small side street which went north and finally opened into the broad, sunbaked Plaza Castelar. Davie glanced back. The man was still there.

Danger had come sooner than he had expected. He was sure now that the man was a Gestapo agent and, somehow, he felt suddenly calm. Shaking this man was simply the first step. The danger would double later on.

In the Castelar, Davie got the feel of Valencia—the endless summer sun, *azueljo* roofs, heat rising from the pavement and gathering under striped awnings. He also felt the held down animosity the people showed in the way they walked around a *Carbinero* or Civil Guard.

His body was loose now, buoyed by a strange kind of confidence. Crossing the Plaza, he made certain the German still followed, then he struck off swiftly toward the older, gloomier section of town. His thoughts ran ahead now, coolly, and with a familiarity for the medieval streets. There were things he knew which the German didn't. One of them was the Calle Baldovi, an alleyway as narrow as a man's shoulders.

Davie waited at the entrance of the Baldovi until he saw the German again. The man stood in the oblique shadows of a doorway. Smiling, Davie entered the alley. It was as deserted as he had expected and the gray, moist walls of tenements on each side cut away the sunlight so that only a strip of pewter blue sky, the width of a man, showed above. He came to the first angle in the

alleyway and paused, his back flattened against the wall.

A satisfied grin crossed his face when he caught a glimpse of the German coming a few yards into the Baldovi, halting and then backing out quickly. Davie understood. Perhaps the German had had experiences with ambushes in narrow streets. It was this he had counted on.

He wheeled, and keeping to the wall, he ran to the opposite end of the narrow alley. It would take the German five minutes to make it around the block. Luck ran with him again for he caught an antiquated taxi at the street-end and rode with it four blocks. Nobody followed and he was now free to use the address he had brought from England.

Leaving the taxi, he entered the back quarters of Valencia—the Barrio Chino. Somewhere in here, among crumbling houses and cheap cafés lived a man wanted by the Spanish Falangists and Gestapo alike—the only man who could help him.

He climbed the damp stairway to the second floor of a moldering house in the quarter. As he rapped on the door, the thought flashed through his mind that this address might also be a trap as were the papers in his pocket. It was another chance to be taken. Then a boyish Spaniard opened the door and looked at him questioningly. The boy wore thick, horn-rimmed glasses.

"Coster, *Brigadas Internacionales,*" Davie announced softly, holding himself alert. "Nuñez in Denia has already spoken for me."

The boy's eyes, enlarged and luminous behind the thick lenses, stared blandly.

"Nuñez?" he asked.

"To see El Puñal." Davie sensed the guarded caution. The boy held his hand in his pocket and the shape of a gun showed there. He stared past Davie, then nodded.

"*Bueno,* come in," he said.

Davie relaxed and followed the other into an ante-room, then up one step across a tiled kitchen. A girl in a white nurse's uniform was working by a window. She gave him a quick glance before returning to her task. The boy opened another door and motioned for him to pass ahead into a small neat bedroom.

"*El camarada Inglés,*" he announced.

Davie took the whole room in at a glance and felt a sudden sense of shock. A strong odor of antiseptics assailed his nostrils as his eyes centered on the bed and he saw a man propped there. The man's face was completely bandaged save for two slits through which burning eyes peered at him. Startled, Davie turned to the boy with glasses.

"El Puñal," said the boy.

"I am Puñal," the man on the bed said. His voice had a Castilian crispness. "We have been expecting you. *Sentate.*" He motioned toward a chair.

DAVIE continued to stare. This was El Puñal—The Dagger. This man who had unified the Republican Underground in Spain after its collapse following the Civil War, an invalid!

"How did you come into Spain?" the bandaged man asked.

"Submarine," replied Davie. He moved the chair forward with his foot and sat down. "Gibraltar to Denia."

"And you saw Nuñez?"

"No."

By merely looking at El Puñal's eyes behind the slits of bandages, Davie began to feel the man's character. It was full of motion and fire and, also, a strange absence of bitterness. There was something annoyingly familiar about those eyes.

"Naturally you didn't see Nuñez," El Puñal continued. "He is dead. His wife betrayed him to the *Falangistas* last week."

Davie nodded soberly. The news did not come as a shock. The meeting with the Gestapo agent had warned him. "I understand," he said. "I am afraid the wife of Nuñez betrayed me also. I was followed."

He saw El Puñal grow tense. "Here?" the Spaniard asked.

"No. I lost him. A German."

El Puñal's eyes followed the Spanish boy who went to the window, then they settled on Coster again. "So you have returned," he said. "You were with the Brigades?"

"British Battalion."

El Puñal nodded his bandaged head toward the boy at the window. "Chico fought with the English at the Battle of Jarama. You were there the same time that December. Do you recognize him?"

Davie smiled at the obviousness of the trap. No one who had been through the horror of Jarama would ever forget that date. Fifteen days of mad fighting from Suicide Hill and across the river to stop the advance around Madrid. He caught himself thinking of the attacks, then stopped, glancing at El Puñal.

"Jarama was in February. The English went up the twelfth," he said quietly.

El Puñal made a gesture with his shoulders. "*S' ta bueno,*" he sighed as though the simple test were enough. His voice became awake and passionate. "*Pues,* your journey into Spain?"

Davie wet his lips and leaned forward, eager to talk. This was his moment now to get the help he needed. He had to convince the Spaniard.

"You know what is happening in England?" he began.

"*Poco*—a little."

"The people are aroused. They're ready to smash Hitler."

El Puñal waved his hand and his slit eyes kindled. "It is time," he said. "We warned you long ago."

"A second front in Europe is on the fire," Davie went on. "The Allies have the reserves and the frame of mind. The sooner it comes, the better it will relieve pressure on Russia and Egypt." He paused, giving the Spaniard a little time to think. Then he moved his hand across the bed, outlining the bulk of Europe.

"We may strike here," he said. "Norway. Or across the Channel. It is a wide front and the Nazis appear thin in some sections. Enemy forces are stretched out from Spain to Danzig like a big coil spring. If we strike at its center—Holland or France—the end of the spring will snap inward on our flanks. The Allies have got to know the exact strength of enemy reinforcements at both tips of the spring. I have three days to find out how many Nazi troops are in Spain; how many the guerrillas can keep occupied."

El Puñal's eyes studied him and again he felt the deep fire within the man. The Spaniard's next word came as a blow.

"Impossible," he said.

Davie came to his feet. "Not exactly," he replied evenly. "But Spain must play her part. Republican Spain. There is still fight in Spaniards, isn't there?"

He watched the Spaniard's eyes. They seemed to glow. Except for that, it was like talking to a blank, whitewashed wall; yet, he felt there was a reaction. "I'll tell you how you can help," he went on desperately. "In Aranjuez, at the Villa Delicias, the German Military Commission for Spain has its files. These files contain complete information about the number and disposition of Nazi effectives in Spain as well as native Fascist forces who might be used against us."

"The English want these?" El Puñal asked.

Davie nodded, his eyes halting a moment at the window through which he could see the church of La Piedad in the sunlight. They returned to the Spaniard and he said, "There is a short-wave radio sender in Aranjuez. The Falangists use it for broadcasts to South America. London will be listening on that wave length for me. I have to get the information from the German files, condense it, send it back to London by wireless."

El Puñal seemed to relax and let his eyes shut. As though it were the first time, Davie noticed his body. He was square shouldered and compactly built; a body that would use up a great deal of energy.

The Spaniard spoke without opening his eyes. "You want us to get at the files?" he asked.

"No. With three men I might get into the Delicias. But I can't occupy the radio station and hold it long enough to get my message through without help. I must have at least thirty men to make an effective surprise raid. There are Republican *guerrilleros* in the Toledo Hills near Aranjuez, no?"

"Possibly."

"Good. You can put me in contact with them."

"It is not so simple," El Puñal replied.

"But you can?"

The Spaniard opened his eyes again and let them burn into Davie. "I will see," he said, his voice crisp. "Return in a half hour."

DAVIE went downstairs. He surveyed the small plaza before the house and was reassured by the movement of people across the sunlight. A few doors down he saw the entrance to a small outdoor café and he went there.

The patio of the café was dim and cool. Split bamboo shades dulled the afternoon sunlight and a light breeze stirred the vine leaves that hung from a balcony overhead. For a moment he thought of other places in Valencia, cafés and the beach. He leaned back and let his lids droop and his fingers play with the glass of iced beer. That was a mistake. The battles which had begun in Spain and had gone on into a World War were printed on the backs of his lids. He was staring at the twisted image of men and broken cities. And it brought back other things he didn't want to think of. It could have been so different.

He settled his attention on the beer and as the half hour passed he grew uneasy. Things seemed to go too smoothly in spite of the slip-up with Nuñez. He wondered about El Puñal. Was the sick man the real thing? Suddenly he remembered those eyes and the queer feeling of familiarity they gave him. He glanced at his watch, then returned up the street to the house.

On the narrow stairway, he rapped at the door once more. The sound of his knuckles echoed and he rapped again. There was no response and no movement within. The silence seemed almost tangible, as if it had curled in the corners of the drab building like a quiet, watchful cat. It was then that he noticed the splintered door panel. Bullet holes! A sudden anxiety filled him.

The door swung inward easily before his touch when he pushed the handle. Now, caution came back to him. He waited for what seemed an eternity before pushing beyond. As his gaze swept the room, his eyes and feelings went cold.

Chico, the boy, lay on the floor in a mess of papers. Davie stooped, turning the sprawling body over. Then his lips drew taut. A bullet hole pocked the exact center of the boy's forehead. He dropped the boy and threw the door of the bedroom open.

He already knew what he would find, but not in the way he found it. El Puñal was slumped upon the bed, his clothing covered with the moist rust of blood. The bandages had been ripped from his face. The face startled Coster. It was not scarred. The bandages had been a disguise. Then, he recognized the features as his thoughts raced back, grasping images out of the past. He had seen this man before in Madrid; not as El Puñal, but as a Cabinet Minister in the Republican Government. With the recognition came a sudden bitter anger against the assassins of this man.

He started to turn away when a low groan from the bed brought him back quickly. The Spaniard wasn't dead. But a glance told him that he was dying. A trickle of blood came through El Puñal's fingers where he held his hand over his abdomen.

Davie lifted his head. "Who was it? *Falangistas*?" he asked. He could feel the pulse beating erratically.

Something like a smile touched the dying man's face. He stirred slightly and his mouth moved as though groping for words. "Did you ever taste death?" he asked softly. The words choked him. Then he struggled again, peered dimly at Davie and said, "The contact . . . *guerrilleros*. . . ."

"Who?" Davie asked.

"Puig."

Davie felt the abrupt spasm, then the loosening in the Spaniard's body. The man was dead.

He turned from the bed, aware now of his own danger. For a moment his face had been filled with emotion. There was nothing in it now but the blunt coolness that was usually there. He cursed himself for having been a fool. He had let his suspicions be lulled too easily. He had let himself into a trap; a trap already filled with death. And he had lost his contact with the *guerrilleros* up north. Filled with the realization that time was slipping through his fingers,

he returned to the doorway leading to the stairs and bolted it. Then he crossed to the window.

The late afternoon sun glanced off the towers of La Piedad and fell into the street without friendliness. It made sharp fast shadows between buildings and filled the squares beneath awnings with blackness. His glance swept across the street toward the church and he drew back slightly, his body tense.

In a huge Mercedes car parked beside the church he caught sight of a *Guardia Civil* and in the back seat, a man with a Falangist armband. Diagonally across from the church, in the shade of a kiosk, he spotted another man in mufti. It was the German with the postage-stamp eyes.

CHAPTER III

MARIPAZ

THE early hours of the evening stretched out into little lifetimes. There was nothing to do but sit tight. Davie understood the tactics of the Gestapo man and the Falangists. He had sensed the underlying animosity of the people in the city and it was something he might use. The Gestapo man certainly understood it also. The Fascists had surprised El Puñal, but the element of surprise had now worn thin. Were they to try to take him in daylight, it might provoke a situation in the quarter. The people were touchy about Gestapo agents. But under cover of night, and the military curfew, they could work quickly and efficiently.

At nine, when the sounds of the city muted and the tension of waiting grew beyond measure, Davie knew it was time to act. He softly unbolted the door to the stairway and groped his way to the floor above.

In the darkness, he found the narrow ladder which led to the roof and a minute later he was crouching in the open. A chilling fog had swept in from the port. The fog reassured him when he paused, keying his ears and senses to every sound. On his left he made out the squat form of a chimney and a slight ridge marking the communication wall between his building and the next. He could traverse a full block along these rooftops before coming down.

Taking a bearing from the towers of the church which thrust up through the fog like black thumbs, he crawled along the flat roofs toward the east end of the block. Suddenly he stopped, something warning him of danger. A shape reared above and before him in the mists and his muscles went taut in that instant.

Then a voice spoke. "*Bitte*, do not move, Herr Coster!"

The German! Davie didn't answer. For a second he hardly breathed. The German's body was no longer ridiculous to look at in the thick fog. It stood there in all its bulk, along with the ominous threat held down so neatly in the neutral tone of the man's voice. Davie felt that the man was smirking. This had become very easy for him.

"Up, hands. *Bitte*," the German repeated.

Davie raised his hands slowly and felt the looseness in his elbows. Now, for the first time, he saw the man's gun, a short-barreled Mauser automatic.

"Hands," the Nazi repeated. It was as if he enjoyed the sound of the word.

Davie shifted slightly, changing his weight to his right foot. "They're up," he replied, quietly.

He made an abrupt downward lunge with the weight of his entire body. His arm slashed the Nazi across the shoulder and throat like a whip-lash. He felt the man stagger back as the gun exploded wildly into the night. Reaching for the Mauser, he caught the German's wrist instead and wrenched it, then drove his fist at the man's jaw. He heard the gun slide across the roof with a metallic clatter. He hit again in the dark, with no motion wasted. It was a hard, effortless blow and he felt the Nazi rock sideways. The man's body stiffened as though it were built too solidly to fall. Then, like a parachute collapsing for want of air, the German folded up, senseless upon the roof.

Davie leaned forward, listening. The man's breath rasped like a dried-out pump.

He felt around in the darkness for the gun. When he found it, the butt was

still moist and warm. He returned and held it over the German. He knew he would have to kill the man, yet his finger hesitated upon the trigger. The man was an enemy, even though he was unconscious, and here in a neutral country. Neutrality meant nothing now. The German's presence in Spain was part of the Axis war strategy.

Suddenly he snicked down the safety on the Mauser and slipped the gun in his belt. He turned away, unable to kill the man in cold blood, yet realizing he might regret it later. The debate had run through his mind in a second, like turning a light off and on. He ran across the roofs to the last house where he found the stairway down.

THE street below was deserted when he crossed it and slipped into an alleyway that was narrow, crooked and poorly lit. Somewhere in back, he heard a call in Spanish. The tone was urgent and questioning. "The *Falangistas,*" he thought.

The fine edge of alertness which had drawn across his nerves was slightly dulled now as he went cautiously through the fog that settled upon the Barrio Chino. He became aware of other sounds than danger. Behind the silence of the street and houses he caught the vague murmur of music, and rarer laughter. An occasional light cut a path across the fog. He saw a woman and a man come out of a doorway ahead and go up the street.

Suddenly he halted, letting his eyes follow them. Ahead, he saw a street patrol—two Civil Guards. He could just make out their patent-leather, three-cornered hats and the stubby, automatic carbines slung over their shoulders when they stopped the couple who had just come from the doorway. The mists muffled the argument which arose.

His hand went to his pocket, then came down slowly with the realization that his identity papers were a trap. He wheeled quickly, his mind made up, and ran into a doorway he had seen ajar.

The thin, liquid melody of a guitar and a flood of cheap rose-colored lights greeted him. His glance took in the long, low room lined with ornate marble-topped tables—a Barrio cabaret, fifth class. Some men and girls sat at the tables and took no notice of him when he sat near the door.

His eyes moved quickly across the people and he felt secure for the moment. They wore plain street dress, a little less provincial than his own. His glance went on, absorbing the shape of the room: a doorway at the rear covered with a shabby green velvet curtain, a small stage to the right of it, and a bar.

He noticed an old man, an Andalusian, sitting on a kitchen chair upon the stage and fingering a guitar. The old man was playing for a dark, slim girl and a boy who danced. Davie watched when a *bolero* was struck. For a moment he found himself involved in the movement on the stage. He saw the familiar flirtation; the girl drawing a mantilla about her shoulders, the boy striking a pose. The two twirled, she averting her face, not too willfully, he trying to see

her face. He followed, then she fled, not too rapidly. The dancing grew more rapid until all at once, it stopped, frozen.

Someone in the cabaret shouted, "*Olé*, well done!" Others took up the applause. Davie grinned, letting his mind run free. This was it, he kept thinking. The chance to live this way, to always be sure of doing it, was worth all the risk. Someday this would return to the streets of Spain as it had been under the Republic, instead of being confined to cheap cafés. To have it was worth the risks he had taken in the Civil War, and the fighting men were doing in Egypt and Russia, the fighting men would do on the Continent soon.

All at once the shouting in the cabaret stopped. Davie's glance shot toward the street door and came up against the Civil Guards who stood there, blinking at the rose lights like a pair of black vultures. His hand went down to his belt and waited there, tautly. Then the police turned and left.

Someone shouted, "*Cabrones*—goats," and this set the music off again. Davie rose to leave when suddenly a hand fell across his, holding him.

"*Allo, Inglés.*" It was the girl dancer. She stood beside him and he saw that her features were strained. His own mouth dropped, startled. The German, he thought, and his eyes went toward the door.

"Please." The girl spoke again, her voice urgent. "Sit and look as if nothing were happening." She sank to the chair opposite his, smiling uncertainly. "You recognize me?" she asked.

Davie drew back his lips, puzzled.

"Maripaz—" the girl gave her name.

Then Davie remembered and his mouth relaxed.

"You were the nurse at El Puñal's," he said.

"*Sí.*"

He noticed the downward curve of her cheeks and her eyes. The eyes were eloquent. "You know what has happened to El Puñal?" he asked.

The girl nodded and he felt the pressure of her fingers digging into his arm, urging him to leave the table. "*Venga*—come to the dressing-room," she murmured. "It is safer."

THE dressing-room was small and badly ventilated. It was stacked high with dance costumes. The girl seemed out of place in it. She was more like something one ought to meet on the slopes of a mountain where there were pine trees and clean air.

"The *Falangistas* and the German murdered El Puñal," Maripaz said, her voice becoming passionate for an instant. "El Puñal sent me to follow you. I watched you in the little café. In case you were not really the English One of the *Brigadas*, our people would have known where to find you. I saw you leave the café, then I saw the *Falangistas* waiting. I knew what had happened."

"Would your people have killed me? Or you?" Davie asked, a wry smile playing across his mouth.

"I think so."

"Do you think I betrayed El Puñal?" inquired Davie persistently. "The German followed me, you know."

Maripaz stared at him and he gave her time to answer. He knew how she felt and the decision which she had to make.

"I think you are of the *Brigadas*," she answered.

"Why?"

"I think you are *simpático*." She gave her first real smile and added, "How did you escape?"

"Over the roofs."

Davie let his eyes rest on her throat. The curve there, which in most women is pretty but without significance, with her was expressive. He looked up and their eyes met. Hers were wide and filled with the troubles of Spain. "How is it you dance here and you were a nurse at El Puñal's? You were not really a nurse there."

"That was for the Movement, the Underground," she replied. "People come here who wish to talk with El Puñal. I made the contacts. And a sick man can have many visitors without the police being suspicious. But a sick man must also have a nurse. The disguise was good until today."

"I was with him when he died," Davie said. "He gave me a name. A name

that might help me with the job I have to do. Puig—is the name. Do you know it?"

The mood in the girl's dark eyes changed quickly. It was as though she had grown to know him in the flash of a second. She gave a surprised laugh.

"Puig—" she said. "Puig is my *novia*, my fiancé. He is a *guerrillero*, the leader of a band in the Montes de Toledo."

Davie grinned back, deeply pleased. This was what El Puñal had tried to tell him. "You will arrange that I see Puig?" he asked.

Maripaz nodded, but her eyes frowned a little. "You can see Puig, yes," she said. "But I don't think he will help you. Puig is stubborn. He will want an order from El Puñal. He will demand proof that you are against the *Falangistas*."

"You know that I am."

"Yes, but I am not Puig. He is *muy burro*—so stubborn. But I will help."

Davie thought again of the Falangists and the German. And he felt the time flowing past and the shortness of the next two days. "I must leave Valencia tonight," he said. "The Gestapo and *Falangistas* will close all the roads to the city by morning. My *salvo* is dangerous, also."

"That is nothing," Maripaz answered. "We will go to the Metropole. I have a way, perhaps." She pushed him toward the door. "Wait. I shall dress."

THE Metropole Hotel faced the darkened Plaza de Toros. Davie remembered it well and he wondered suspiciously as to why Maripaz had brought him here. In the old days of the Civil War it had been the most modern hotel in Valencia, and the most talked about. More state secrets had been sold over its bar than whiskey, and when the journalists and foreign agents weren't there, the Brigade men took over—six to a room.

He followed Maripaz across the small, marble lobby. For a second he caught himself searching for old faces, then snapped out of it. There was always the danger of getting lost in the past, of losing his vigilance in the present. He began wondering again why the girl had brought him here. The place had had a bad odor to Republican Spain and it was now probably filled with German "tourists."

The girl held his hand as they entered the dining-room which was deserted but for a group of Spaniards at one table and someone alone at another. Even the dining-room hadn't changed, he realized. The stylized murals of ladies in black tights, top hats and with silver fingertips were still on the wall, a little faded now. The potted palms were still here, and an extremely correct waiter in full dress.

"There he is," Maripaz said, suddenly. She led Davie toward the man who sat alone. The man rose, seeing her. For a moment, Davie held back. The man looked English or American. But he could be German. "This is Coster, an *Inglés*," he heard Maripaz say to the man.

The man grinned and shoved his hand out, gripping Davie's fist. "Hildebrand," he said. He was somewhat drunk and waved lavishly toward the chairs. "Hildebrand," he repeated, as though reminding himself who he was. "*Denver Tribune*, foreign news. You hungry? Everybody is hungry in this goddamn country." He hiccoughed and shouted for the waiter. "*Oyé*, Jiminez."

Davie held back, his nerves made taut and on edge by the journalist's noise. Then his glance broke with a small smile when he saw the American reach for a small suitcase beside his chair, open it and take out a half dozen tins of food.

With almost snobbish aloofness, the waiter removed the cans to a sideboard. Davie watched him open them with a can opener he carried and bring them back to the table on a silver tray. Hildebrand gave the man a tin of beef.

"Tip." He grinned toward Davie.

Davie nodded, observing the newsman. He was middle-aged and built like a two-by-four. He had the look of an American farmer; a kind of naive wholesome expression which was brought out sharply by his tangled, corn-colored hair.

He tried to get a feeling for Hildebrand's sympathies, but found himself stopped. It was as if Hildebrand's emo-

tions were embalmed in alcohol, or he might be using the alcohol to cover up his naiveté. Davie turned to the food. He was famished.

After a moment, Maripaz whispered to him, nodding toward Hildebrand. "He is *muy simpático*, the American."

Hildebrand looked up, wrinkling his eyes, trying to keep Davie in line with them.

"Seaman?" he asked.

Davie shook his head. He said nothing, not knowing how far he could go.

"Señor Coster fought with the *Brigadas Internacionales*," Maripaz said. "He now fights with the *Inglés*."

The journalist whistled softly. He was not as drunk as he appeared. "You were in that mess?" He gave a short, ironic laugh. "Me too, but on the other side—Burgos. I covered news for Franco. How do you like that?"

CHAPTER IV

GUERRILLERO

THE Spaniards from the other table left the dining-room and the waiter went about, switching off individual table lamps. The lights, as they went off, seemed to reduce the size of the room. Davie glanced at his watch. Twenty minutes had elapsed.

Hildebrand made a careless gesture with his shoulders and burped again. "Look," he said, "if the police are looking for you, then Valencia is no place for Maripaz. The people at the desk saw her come in with you. They know her, and tomorrow morning, when they send your description in to the police . . . well." He paused, lighting a cigarette. "O.K.," he said at last. "I'll see you up to Toledo. Both of you."

Davie nodded. He had only explained his position and the necessity of reaching the hills below Toledo. He had said nothing of his mission in Spain but he now felt that the American was making a strong guess. The man was shrewd and at times it showed through his front of artlessness. He also sensed something else within Hildebrand; a kind of bitter disillusionment.

"The car is outside. Wait there. I'll be down in a minute," Hildebrand said.

Davie and Maripaz waited outside. The fog had lightened somewhat. They leaned close to the stone wall of the hotel, shutting themselves into the darkness, neither talking. Davie thought about Hildebrand, worrying because the man had agreed so easily. Did Hildebrand know that Maripaz was part of the Spanish Underground? He wondered about that. It was an American journalist's business to get around, but not with the wrong side.

Then the journalist appeared, carrying two suitcases. He went toward the curb, walking fast. His car, a small, four-place Austin, stood there with the run-down patience of all small things which are forced to carry big men.

"Get in, quick," said Hildebrand. He went about, kicking the tires as though urging a small donkey into action, then squeezed behind the wheel. "U. P. man at the Regina called," he explained between his teeth as the car started, "Police are searching all the hotels. Looking for an Englishman."

At the first street, the car swung northward. Davie looked quickly toward the American. "This isn't the route to Toledo," he said.

"No. Barcelona," Hildebrand replied. "I told them at the desk to send my mail to Barcelona. "We'll switch back in a minute."

The American hiccoughed again. It sounded artificial and he smiled at both Davie and the girl. Suddenly Davie grinned back. The American had a head on his shoulders.

The road led out across the broad, fertile *huerta* surrounding Valencia. It spun a net through little towns that lay white and silent beneath a starless sky. There was little talk in the car as it spun toward the higher, dry plateau beyond Chiva. The compactness of the car, and its forward movement gave off a lulling sense of security. Davie let his head nod. He thought vaguely of Maripaz having been spotted with him. It meant that she could never return to Valencia and gave him a feeling of being responsible for her. It was then that he fell asleep.

He slept fitfully, coming to life only as the car passed through Tarancon and left the Madrid highway, turning westward. The morning sun slanted after them now, slowly gathering its forces, accumulating heat as the day slipped back across the speedometer dial. Beyond Ocana, they halted a few minutes beside the road.

Hildebrand opened his two suitcases: one filled with food, the other with bottled brandy. Davie ate without much taste in his mouth. The sun beat down, blistering the ground underfoot, sucking at the dryness of the rust colored hills dotted with olive trees. His thoughts worked ahead, into the narrow margin of time he had left for his work.

MARIPAZ sat beside him, her eyes absorbing him curiously. "The American wishes to come all the way—to the *guerrilleros*," she said.

Davie looked at her, then at Hildebrand.

"It's dangerous," he replied. He didn't like the idea of a stranger walking in among the guerrillas, knowing their faces, where they hid.

"He is *simpático*," Maripaz added. "He won't say anything. He has helped before."

Davie raised his brows. The American showed more sides to himself every hour. He glanced at Hildebrand's face. It didn't say anything. It still wore the naive look, somewhat suffused now by the blistering sun and the brandy. His eyes met Hildebrand's and the American spoke.

"I'm safe," he said, a chuckle in his voice. "Call my part in this—lend-lease."

"Right." Davie stood, ready to leave again.

"How far now?" the newspaperman asked.

"A little more. An hour perhaps to Fuentepiño. It is a very small village. Very Republican," Maripaz said.

As the car jolted forward, slowly straddling the crown of a tawny, clay-baked road which rose steadily, winding into the bare, rocky Toledo region, Davie's attention shifted to the land. He measured distances in his mind, distances he must use with caution and understanding in the coming hours. The mountains here were like small stony fortresses themselves.

The road turned into a cart trail. It cut between shoulders of desolate, scorched rock and terraced olive orchards. "There—" Maripaz pointed. "Fuentepiño."

The village hung precariously to the side of the mountains, held there it seemed, by a crumbling rampart wall. The car drove on, through the open gates and down the single street. The afternoon sun had beaten the street dry and had left it deserted, but for a mule near the plaza fountain.

"Stop before the church," Maripaz said.

Davie sensed the eyes of the village watching them suspiciously from behind half closed shutters as they left the car and followed the girl into the coolness of the church cloister.

"The *guerrilleros* never stay in one place more than a few days," Maripaz explained. "Padre Rozales will know where they are. He is *antifascista*, too."

A priest came from the door of the rectory, smiling. He was an old man with a great deal of kindly grace. He wiped his hands on his cassock and shook hands with Maripaz.

"You are back, Maripaz," he said. "This time to marry Puig?"

Davie tightened up within, hearing the question. It had stirred up his mind, letting things in which had no right to be there. Then he saw the priest give Hildebrand and himself a quick, searching glance. The priest seemed to accept them with the girl.

"Where is Puig now?" Maripaz asked.

Father Rozales smacked his lips. "Puig is at the broken castle. He has been very successful. Near Talavera he surprised eight Italian *cabrones* and captured two *máquinas*, a little one which is as light as a carbine and shoots bullets . . . bup . . . bup . . . bup . . . bup . . . twenty without a stop. And also a big French one which shoots two hundred bullets from a belt like a snake."

"A Hotchkiss," Davie said.

Father Rozales talked a little more

Explosivo had no politics expect dynamite. . .

and his talk was openly Republican, as though he had a great moral contempt for those who were now in Madrid. It sounds almost too open, thought Davie.

"When night comes," explained the priest, "I will take you to the *guerrilleros*. Puig will be there, and some of his men. I do not know what good it will do you," he said, glancing at Davie. "You want something of him. But you are English, no?"

"*Sí, padre,*" Davie replied, frowning. His mind tried to get in behind the priest's words for he had now gotten the distinct impression that something was not quite right. Again he sensed the bitterness which he had felt under the skin of Spain. It was now of a different sort, as though it had worn thinner, but it still seemed to threaten the short stack of hours left before him.

THAT evening they left Fuentepiño afoot; Davie, Hildebrand and Maripaz following the old priest across the mountain trail which stabbed farther into the wild, jagged hills. Darkness had already begun absorbing and blotting out the tormented colors of the Spanish sunset; to the east higher mountains hedged off the sky. Somewhere in the distance, a donkey brayed.

Davie felt out the shapes of the hills with a military eye. A half dozen men, given a few machine guns, could hold off an army battalion in these ridges. His respect for Puig's selection of this place increased. Ahead, he heard Father Rozales scaling the slopes. The old clergyman moved with the agility of a mountain goat.

"*Oyé.*" Father Rozales halted. Davie saw the brooding shoulders of the castle just ahead. It commanded a total view of the surrounding land. Approaching, Davie saw that its outer walls had crumbled and the main gate, leading to the courtyard, had been torn from its pivots.

"No one has lived there since before the Republic," he heard Maripaz say. She was standing close to him, her breath coming fast.

Father Rozales whistled in the darkness.

"*Quién es*—who passes?" a voice asked out of the night.

"Rozales, *camarada.*"

A hunched figure appeared. Davie made out the features of the partisan guard—a Spaniard with hard, deeply etched cheeks, a peasant. He carried a rifle, one of the old, light "*Mexicanskis*" once used by the Republican army. The guard peered at Maripaz. "Ai, *guapa*—beautiful," he said, pleased. "Who are the others?"

"Two *Inglés,*" the girl replied. "One comes from El Puñal. He wishes to see Puig."

"Puig is away. But come."

They went into the castle, across the courtyard. Davie caught the restless movement of tethered horses in the shadows of the yard. The guard left them and Padre Rozales went on into the big room of the castle. Here, part of the roof had fallen in and stars decorated a ragged square of distant ceiling.

A man crouched near a small fire, feeding it blades of straw. Others, five or six, were caught in the light glow. Some of them stood now, watching the newcomers. "*Hola* . . . Maripaz . . . *chicita* . . ." their voices rose in greeting. On these men stood the mark of *guerrilleros*—the softness of voice, the alertness, the wiriness. Here were men selected for savage endurance, courage beyond others, and a hate greater than

themselves. They gathered around Davie, the priest, Hildebrand and the girl.

Davie looked at Maripaz. "There are only eight. You said that Puig had many more."

"He has. But many are daytime farmers, nighttime fighters. More will come in during the night. Only these cannot return to their homes. They are known and wanted by the *Falangistas*."

An old man stood up beside Maripaz. "Here is Explosivo. He is in charge when Puig is gone."

"I am the oldest," Explosivo replied, softly.

"He is the oldest." Maripaz smiled compassionately. "He was a shoemaker and he is very *antifascista*. His wife and sons were killed by the Italians at Ovejuna. This was after the betraying peace of Casado which ended the fighting in Spain. Explosivo has no politics except dynamite now."

"Dynamite?" Hildebrand looked interested. The American was stone sober.

Suddenly the quiet in the courtyard was broken by the clattering of a horse's hoofs. A moment later, a stocky, dark-skinned young Spaniard strode into the circle of firelight. He had hard solid cheeks, a stubborn mouth and quick eyes. He was older than Davie, perhaps thirty.

"Puig—" Maripaz embraced the Catalan leader.

Puig abruptly stared at Davie and Hildebrand. Davie offered his hand. "*Salud*," he said. "I'm Coster. I was with the International Brigades."

The Catalan's lower lip bunched out, heavily. "*Ai?*" he grunted.

"In Valencia, El Puñal told me that your band here might help me. I am in Spain now to do work against the *Fascistas*," Davie explained. "And for England."

Puig glanced at his guerrillas. "Have you searched him?" he demanded bluntly.

"I carry only this," Davie answered, sensing the antagonism in the man. He handed over the Mauser, captured from the German in Valencia. The clip was in his side pocket and he brought that out too.

. . . but Puig was bitter toward the English.

Puig looked at him suspiciously. "What kind of a thing is this?" he asked. "A man doing work against the *Fascistas* with an empty gun. Is that the way English fight wars? What proof is there that I should allow you here? Has El Puñal sent any?"

"No. He is dead."

"Then you are not *antifascista*, eh?"

DAVIE smiled coldly. He rolled back his right sleeve, revealing a long, ugly scar furrowing his forearm. "Explosive bullet. At Vinaroz. I can take off my shirt and show you another." He felt that his words had impressed the *guerrilleros* who waited silently, their faces made mobile and expressive by the changing light of the small fire.

But with Puig, his words had established no contact. There remained only that Catalan stubbornness and he had to fight down his own inclination to match it with anger. What was it, he thought? Did Puig think that his position among his men was threatened by an outsider who brought a request from El Puñal?

"And this one?" Puig made a short, clipped gesture toward Hildebrand. "He has not the look of a soldier."

"He is a newspaperman. American," Maripaz put in.

"You were a fool to bring him here."

Puig's reply came flatly.

Davie looked at the Catalan quickly. Puig's eyes were, more than ever, black and stubborn—a man with a great deal of will. "Let's not waste time," Davie said firmly. "I have work to do. It's important. Too important for little things."

"What work?" Puig demanded.

"To get information."

"Information!" Puig exploded. "Is that the most an Englishman can do in Spain?" He spat into the fire. "I will have nothing of it. I fight. That is why I am here."

"I've come to fight too." Davie leveled his voice. "I will need fighters to help me. Thirty men who are not afraid. But, first, I will explain. The English, the Americans and the many exiled governments now in London will make a second front in Europe to battle the *Fascistas*. You understand? To make it successful, we must know how many Nazis and *Fascistas* in Spain will be sent across France against us. The information is at the Villa Delicias in Aranjuez where the German Commission stays."

He paused, letting his eyes move across the faces surrounding him. Maripaz watched, her cheeks softened by the firelight. Hildebrand leaned forward now, wide-eyed, hearing this for the first time, perhaps feeling that even he was involved in something greater than himself.

"Tomorrow, or the next day, or the day following, I must have thirty men," Davie continued. He noted the flatness in Puig's eyes and the interest in those of the guerrillas. Puig did not want to listen to this, he felt. "You know Aranjuez?" he went on, nevertheless, pointing his words at the Catalan.

Crouching, he built a map of Aranjuez upon the stone floor with straws. "Villa Delicias is beside the Tagus River and just across the steel bridge here," he explained. "I need only a few men there. It must be done quietly. But at the same moment that I enter the Delicias five men should explode grenades across town by the Bull Ring. It will make a distraction.

"Following that, we must all fall back toward the radio station, a mile beyond town. This road here, the single road which runs from the town to the station, is where I must have all thirty men."

"I could capture that station with five men—and smash it," Puig interrupted disdainfully.

"I don't want it smashed," Davie replied. "There are only two technicians at the station. We will have no trouble with them. But the radio has a land cable which brings broadcasts down from studios in Madrid and we must switch this off to broadcast from the little studio in the station itself. When the land line is cut, the *Fascistas* will know something is wrong at the station. They might order troops there from the barracks in Aranjuez. We must stop them on the road and hold them off as long as it takes me to send my information back to London."

He pointed at a position on the straw map between the town and the station. "When I have finished with the station we will retreat," he said slowly. "But, some of us must make up our minds to die at this point on the road. At least five must remain there to cover the withdrawal of the others. I will return to the road, and I'll need a machine gun." He looked at the faces, each set in the firelight. "It is a small thing to die for, you understand? The people of Europe are waiting."

"When must you send the information?" Father Rozales interrupted.

"As soon as possible," Davie replied. He could not tell any of these men the exact hour at which London expected his voice. They would be waiting there in England, one minute after midnight, each night. It was the one step in his mission he could not give out. It was the timing, to the exact minute, that would identify the information coming over the air as true or false. "We must not waste time," he said to Puig. "You have thirty men?"

He laid his problem before these men and made a little motion with his hand as though placing it squarely before Puig himself. He knew that the *guerrilleros* understood the dangers and were thinking it over slowly. And they were also waiting for Puig.

The Catalan spat in the fire, then listened to the sizzling sound a moment. Finally, he stood, facing Davie Coster with features overlaid with passionate obstinacy.

"You'll help?" Davie asked.

Puig's lower lip jutted forward. "No," he answered with a bitterness. "The *Inglés* betrayed Spain."

CHAPTER V

PRIDE OF A SPANIARD

DAVIE'S eyes met Puig's head-on. For an instant he had been stunned. Now, he could catch in a breath, a deep one, all the way down. His feelings must have shown plainly on his face for the *guerrilleros* were gazing at him, expectantly. It had never occurred to him even to question the willingness of the Spaniards.

He heard Hildebrand chuckle and say, "Ha—*touché*."

There wasn't anything to say. Puig knew what he was doing, and he was boss of these *guerrilleros*. The Catalan stood there, blunt of chin, plainly antagonistic. "*Carga en la lêche*," Puig blasphemed. "I will not risk good Spanish fighters for a British plan. Will the English help us against Franco? Will they? *Oyé*, they send an ambassador to Madrid. You see."

Davie wet down the corners of his mouth and smiled without feeling the inward effect of the smile. He measured the bitterness in Puig. It seemed almost inexhaustible. Puig was—he thought of the Spanish term, *muy burro*—very thickheaded. He could not see that England had changed.

"Have you been in England?" Davie suddenly asked the Catalan.

The question caught Puig by surprise. He puckered his lips, puzzled.

"I thought not." Davie smiled again, surer. "You don't know what has happened there. We've got men in there now—a government ready to fight the Nazis."

"Do they fight Franco?" Puig cut in sharply.

"Do the Chinese fight Wang Ching Wei who is the little dictator for the Japanese?" Davie countered. "No. They fight the Japanese. And for Europe it is more important to smash the Nazis now than the little dictators. It is more important for everyone. The Nazis are the strongest. The little *Fascistas* everywhere gain strength from them. Smash the Nazis and the little ones will fall apart." Davie glanced at Maripaz and added, "El Puñal understood that."

Puig did not answer and Davie gave him a little while to think. He knew how the Catalan felt. Even Englishmen had felt that way during the Spanish war, seeing the Nazis and Italians overrun Spain's Republic while England merely stood by. We were slow, too damn slow, but we're moving now, he thought.

"The *Inglés* are people who make promises, then betray them," Puig said venomously.

Davie moved toward him, his fist clenched. Suddenly Maripaz stood between them, facing Puig. "Puig," she said solemnly, "Coster was in the *Brigadas*."

The sight of the girl eased Davie's anger down. It was foolish to fight here. Time was slipping past him. He would have to force Puig's hand in another manner if words could not reach him.

He turned toward the other guerrillas. "I need a man to go down into Aranjuez tonight and watch the Delicias. He will report back in the morning," he said.

Their faces looked back at him without a change of expression. Then Hildebrand said, "Me?"

"No. A Spaniard. Someone who knows Aranjuez."

Puig laughed harshly. "No one will go. That is my order."

Davie looked down at the old man, Explosivo, who was sitting, as he always did, with his legs held together as though holding a shoe between them that he was repairing. "Someone here will understand that my country has changed since the Spanish war," he said. "The English also feel the Nazi sting and are fighting back. This second front in Europe will help the Republicans in Spain as it will help people in France and Holland. It is something you cannot understand unless you realize that

you must plant the olive tree before you can reap the fruit from it."

He turned his back to Puig now, and spoke directly to Explosivo. "You know Aranjuez?"

"Yes." The old man nodded.

"You understand, there must be a second front?"

"It is too late," Puig interrupted, jerking Davie's arm. "England is always too late. It should have started four years ago when Catalonia was falling. Were not the English ships being sunk then by the *Fascistas?*"

"Shut up," Davie snapped. Then to Explosivo: "You will go, old man?"

The old man rose and looked at the faces around the fire. "I think the *Inglés* is right," he said, hesitantly. "I am going."

Davie felt the daggers of anger that Puig centered upon his back as he took Explosivo into the courtyard to explain his duties. He knew the Catalan's pride, the gigantic pride of a Spaniard.

"You have broken Puig a little before his band," Explosivo explained, when they were outside in the darkness. "It might have some good in it, or it might turn out bad."

"It's a chance I'm taking," Davie replied.

WHEN the old man had gone, he took a deep breath of the cool darkness and tried to right the confusion in his mind. It was as mixed as the faint odor of oil, garlic and rabbit within the castle. He walked beyond the gate to a point where a single olive tree stood on a crest overlooking a small, dark arroyo. The smell of sage was strong here, and the stars had come out brightly, blinking down with cold detachment.

"Davie—" a voice called behind him.

He spun about, then smiled. It was Maripaz. She came close to him, and sat at the foot of the tree. "Are you worried about Puig, *Inglés?*" she asked after a moment. "He has just now threatened to betray you to the *Falangistas.* But do not worry. It is Puig's way of anger. He will not do it."

Davie felt the bed of fallen olive leaves crackle crisply as he sat beside her.

"That doesn't worry me," he replied. He gave her a smile in the darkness. "What comes will come. I'm thinking of the thirty men. Will they work with me?"

"If Puig says so."

"And otherwise not?"

"It depends. . . . Did Explosivo go?"

"Yes. He'll borrow the padre's bicycle to go into Aranjuez. He should be back in the morning."

"Puig has been leader a long time," said Maripaz. "He is very brave, but you are a stranger and he is angry."

"Because I'm English?"

She hesitated and Davie sensed that she was studying him. "Puig does not like the *Inglés,*" she said after a moment, "but that is not the whole reason for his anger. It is because he thinks I love you."

Davie's eyes shot toward her. By some faint reflected light he saw the sparkle in her jet hair and the placid, questioning expression in her face.

He said: "You are Puig's *novia.*" It was both a statement and a question.

"I have asked myself," Maripaz murmured. "The answer is not always there. And since I first saw you yesterday, the answer is even harder."

A strange sense of knowing ran through Davie's body. He felt the girl's nearness. Then he held her in his arms, drawing her closer, kissing her mouth. The ache that had swallowed his heart remained a long time.

After a moment, Maripaz drew away but her hand still clung to his, desperately. He felt her looking at his face in the darkness. "Why did you come to Spain, Davie?" he heard her ask. "You are not one who likes war. I can feel that."

"No." That was all he could answer.

Maripaz remained silent. She didn't seem to feel like talking. That suited Davie. Talk stirred his mind up, kept it working, letting things into his head that he was trying to keep out. He liked life, the kind you could take easily; working so much, drinking a little, laughing. He had battled for five years for that, both in Spain and England. Deep inside, he understood the contradiction. Only by winning this war would he find

the solution to his wants—even if he must die in it.

Now, he knew suddenly that he had forgotten himself. He had forgotten the tensions that were building up, layer upon layer to a decision in Aranjuez. He stood up, looking at the girl, realizing that the love she brought him had no place in the picture. It would alienate Puig and endanger his whole mission.

Maripaz seemed to understand it also. She walked silently beside him as he returned to the castle.

DAVIE slept in the courtyard, near the broken gate. When he awoke the following morning the sun was slanting sharply across the flagstones and he saw Padre Rozales, Hildebrand and Explosivo crouching in the sun, talking. Seeing Explosivo, he thought, "This must be the day." The feeling that time was slipping through his fingers woke him completely.

Hildebrand was listening to the priest with alcoholic intentness. There had been much drinking the night before, Davie remembered.

"The firing squad of *Falangistas* waited for the prisoners to be called up in order," Rozales was droning. "This was one week after the peace of Casado. *Falangistas* like doing things in order so the names were read from the list."

The priest puckered his brow seriously and read an imaginary list off his palm. "First, is a little man, one who came to my church each day. His name is read and he takes his place at the wall. He lifts his fist, clenched tightly. 'Hands down,' the officer shouts. The little man holds his fist higher and raises his shoulders in disdain. Then he is shot. After that, the next twenty raise their fists when they are shot, or they cry, *'Viva la Republica!'* "

Father Rozales stared earnestly at Hildebrand. "The *Falangistas* then drive away in their automobile, thinking Fuentepiño is no longer a Republican village. But the next day, everyone is a stronger Republican, *tambien las mujeres*—also the women. The barbarism makes them Republicans. *Cristo*, I am sure, is a Republican too."

Davie sat up and the talk stopped. The others looked at him as though something had gone wrong. "*Qué va?* What's up?" he asked Explosivo. "You've been to Aranjuez?"

The old man moved closer, crouching with his legs tight together.

"I have seen friends in Aranjuez," he said. "There is but one *Carbinero* guard stationed near the door of the Villa Delicias. Of the foreign ones, there are only three now."

"Three?" Davie was alert at once. "I was told there are at least eight or ten on the Nazi staff."

"Eight." Explosivo nodded. "But five are in Madrid. A big *cojone* has come down from Berlin and they meet him there. They will be back in Aranjuez tomorrow or the next day, *quién sabe?*"

Father Rozales stood up, his face alive with expectations.

"Tonight will be good then. You can strike at them?" he said.

"We should." Davie gave him half an inch of nod. His own face didn't tell anything but the thought kept sawing through his mind that this was the night. "Thirty men can reach Aranjuez on foot before midnight," he added.

"*Sí, hombre,*" Explosivo put in. "With dynamite."

"Who is the big one from Berlin?" Davie asked.

Explosivo shrugged. "No one knows." He looked toward the castle doorway. "Will Puig and the others come?"

"Puig—" Hildebrand hiccoughed.

Davie looked at the American. "Puig is drunk," said Hildebrand. "He drank all night and sent his men over the mountains toward Talavera. Raid. They won't be back for three or four days." Hildebrand motioned toward the castle's interior. "He's in there."

DAVIE ran across the courtyard. A sense of disaster threaded through him, and also anger. "The fool," he thought. The others followed him, excited. As he entered the gray, coolness of the castle his nerves began easing down. He realized anger would get him nowhere. This was the way things happened.

Puig sat on the floor, his back braced against a saddle. Davie's glance took in the jug of spilled wine beside the Catalan, and the empty bottles of brandy. He cursed Hildebrand who had brought the stuff.

"Davie—" Maripaz looked up. She was wiping Puig's head and cheeks with a cold, wet saddle blanket. Puig stared about, his eyes vacuous, his head wobbling.

"How long has this gone on? The drinking?" Davie demanded.

Davie grabbed the Catalan's shirt-front and jerked him to his feet. "Where are the grenades?" he demanded.

Maripaz looked as though she had been crying.

"All night."

"Why wasn't I awakened?"

"No one knew. Puig broods quietly when he drinks."

Davie held his anger down and spoke evenly. "Is it true about the *guerrilleros?* Do any remain?"

"Only the guard at the pass," Hildebrand interrupted.

"And the two machine guns?"

Maripaz put the blanket aside. "They took the little *máquina.* The big one is here, and the explosives. Puig has hidden them." She stood up and put her hand on Davie's arm. "I am so sorry, *Inglés.*" Davie wondered if she was giving up. She sounded glad that he might not make the raid.

Puig grunted and stirred. He tried to reach his feet and failing, sat stiffly upright. He worked to focus his eyes. Seeing Davie, his bitterness came forth. "*Cabrone!*" he shouted. The effort rocked his head sideways.

Davie reached suddenly, grabbed the Catalan's shirt-front and jerked him to his feet. "Where are the grenades?" he demanded. It was like talking to a wet rag which would fall limp the moment he let go. "The grenades?" he repeated. To his left, he saw Maripaz watching, saying nothing.

A little stiffness came into Puig's body. He stood alone now and jerked back clumsily. "What can you do with grenades, *Inglés?*" he growled, the bitterness still in his voice.

"I want grenades for Aranjuez, tonight."

Puig's mind digested the thought. He blinked at the square of light falling through the broken roof, then lifted his eyes so they met Davie's. "You go alone?" he asked.

Davie nodded.

"Impossible." Puig belched. "I don't believe it."

Maripaz came forward. There was fear in her eyes, and hope. "Puig is right," she insisted. "You must wait until the *guerrilleros* return."

Davie smiled. He knew how she felt. The same ache was also within him, the same torment. It reached into him strongly now, realizing that he could give up the idea of the raid and remain alive with the girl. Would it be that they had found each other for but one hour in a lifetime, or could he make it last another few days?

He glanced at Puig, wobbling back and forth. If the raid weren't made today, he thought, he'd be no better than the Catalan. He smiled at Maripaz again. "I must go today," he said. "There are people waiting." It had been hard to say that. To make up his mind to it.

"Even with ten men you'll be slaughtered," Puig interrupted. "You can take the Delicias, but not hold the radio station. That I know. Go back to England, *hombre.*" Puig rolled his eyes around, at Father Rozales, Explosivo, Hildebrand and the girl.

"He does not go alone," Explosivo put in quietly. "I'll help. I know where the grenades are."

Davie heard Hildebrand clear his throat. "Sometimes a typewriter is no good unless it shoots lead," said the American. "This is one of them. Deal me in."

The journalist spoke as though he were trying to hide a grain of sentimentality. Davie grinned warmly at the two men, then became instantly practical.

"Three grenades each, and pistols," he said. "The big machine gun will be too heavy to take. It needs more than the men we have."

"Take it in the car," Hildebrand advised.

Davie shook his head. "No. We'll take the car only up to Villanuelas. Then we go by foot up the Tagus Valley to where the Jarama River joins it. We'll cross the Jarama to where the Madrid road runs down toward Aranjuez. It's farm country. We'll touch the Tagus again and drop to the Delicias by boat. Explosivo found one, up-river. . . . The grenades, where are they?" he asked the old man.

Puig crossed in front of Davie and faced Explosivo. He sucked his breath in noisily. "Fool, Explosivo," he shouted. "Let the *Inglés* be a fool, not you. It is not for the Spanish to fight England's war. The *Inglés* does not help us."

"I'm going," Explosivo replied.

Davie felt Maripaz' fingers reach for his. She stood beside him, glaring angrily at Puig. "Explosivo is right," she said, passionately. "I am going with the *Inglés* also."

Puig stopped short. His eyes met Maripaz', then his expression changed swiftly. It was like that of a man who has suddenly seen his veins cut, watches the blood run out and knows that in a very few minutes the shape of the world will be different.

CHAPTER VI

ELEVENTH HOUR

THE headlights of a camion racing along the Aranjuez-Madrid highway scooped hollows out of the night and filled them with roiled, dusty light. Shadows leaped upward and flattened against the trees bordering the road. In the darkness, on one side, Davie Coster waited.

When the camion flashed past, he jerked his wrist up, spotting the dial of his watch. Then he ducked down. The truck plunged on into a gulf of noise and the tail-light faded toward Madrid. He waited another minute until the night was overlaid with silence, then he crawled back to where Maripaz, Hildebrand and Explosivo waited. He saw the Spaniard crouching, his legs together as they always were, but instead of a shoe between them, there was a hand grenade.

"Ten thirty," he said softly, then to Explosivo, "What are you doing?"

The old man nodded toward Hildebrand. "He has never used one. I showed him."

Davie nodded quietly and now looked at the girl. He wondered whether it had been right to let her come. He did not want to think about her because now it meant thinking about her and himself. He touched her shoulder. "Afraid?" he whispered.

Maripaz did not answer, but her eyes told him more than the silence. He knew how she felt. Even when you were used to danger, it still bound you in a tight nervous knot. And it was worse now. He felt even more keenly the conflict between everything he had wanted and what he had to do. Two days before, he had simply wanted to relax and enjoy Spain, but he couldn't because of what had happened to Spain and because of his job.

Now, he wanted Maripaz, perhaps more than all these other things. He tried to stop thinking and apply himself to the pattern of this night's work. But each time, those other thoughts and feelings crept back into his mind. He would probably die, and he would have to let her die, too. And they had just found each other.

"Do we go?" Hildebrand's hoarse whisper broke upon his thoughts.

Davie rearranged the grenades in his pocket and felt the straps that held the German Mauser automatic to his wrist. "The Delicias is a quarter mile below us, where the road crosses the river," he said, his voice barely reaching the others. "There is a suspension bridge. We'll cut around above it to the boat-house up river. *Venga.*"

The tension grew up around them as they rose, ran across the road and went among the trees on the opposite side. Hildebrand stumbled and cursed.

"Stop being clumsy, Hildy," Davie whispered.

"Who's being clumsy?"

Hildebrand's reply seemed to relieve the tension for a moment. They cut across a soft, silty field. There was little need for caution here for the earth absorbed every sound but that of their breathing.

The touch of this soil and the shape of the trees were as sharp in Davie's mind as though it were daylight. This town, with its palaces of kings, had been a small cannon's range from the front lines of the Spanish War when he had last seen it. He could place the exact spot where the artillery shell had struck a corner of the suspension bridge one morning. And he could remember the dead dog lying in the sunbaked Plaza de la Libertad which someone hungry had shot, then could not eat. These things went through his mind and made it difficult to feel that there was danger in Aranjuez now.

THEY came to another row of trees and a road. Crossing it, Davie went ahead, alone this time. His thoughts had shaped down now to just the ones he needed for this job. He wasn't thinking about anything but the distance to the Delicias and the minutes before midnight would be upon him.

He came to the river, a short distance above the town. Here one could smell the wetness in the air. The river curved gently, its surface glossy with stars. In another minute the others came up. Maripaz shivered a little and stayed close to him.

"Wait here," he said. "I'll whistle for you. Nightingale."

"That the right bird?" Hildebrand asked.

Davie slipped down the bank to the river's edge. He moved with the ease of one whose eyes had felt out this ground before. A hundred yards along the bank and he went more slowly until he reached the dark square of a building—it had once been a royal boathouse. Prowling in the darkness along the water edge, he found the boat.

His fingers measured the length and condition of the boat. He knew now, as though it came from the touch of the boat, that this was it—the beginning. In another few minutes . . . he tried not to think. . . .

He whistled softly in the darkness. There was no other sound but the sly rustling of elm leaves on the trees bordering the quiet river. A minute or two later he heard the crackling of a twig.

"Explosivo?"

Explosivo appeared. Maripaz came behind him, and Hildebrand. Maripaz had her revolver in her hand now. Davie motioned toward the boat. "No noise," he whispered. "There's a gardener's house across the river in the park. Probably troops quartered there."

The boat edged into the stream, drifting beneath the shadow of the bank. Explosivo sat in the back and began poling it.

At the next bend, Davie knew what to expect. "Down!" he ordered. "Keep from sight." He felt the straps holding the Mauser to his wrist, then rubbed his palms along his trousers in expectation. The boat moved downstream several minutes more. Finally it reached the bend. As the river straightened, lights on both sides struck with a suddenness.

Directly ahead, he could see the suspension bridge and beyond it, a small dam. On the left bank there was a pavilion. It was brightly lit and from within the sound of music and dancing crossed the river. The noise would afford some protection, thought Davie. Opposite the pavilion, across the river, he saw the Villa Delicias.

"Slower, Explosivo."

The boat nudged along the bank, came to a concrete abutment. The wood scraped and Davie held his breath. No sound came from the Villa. Now, the boat slid parallel with the patio which overlooked the river and Davie grabbed a wrought-iron railing. For a second the boat danced, stilled in the water.

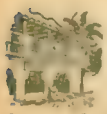
"Explosivo, take the *Carbinero* at the front," he ordered. "Maripaz, stay with the boat." His eyes roved the shadows, taking in the familiar shape of the Villa. On the second floor, he remembered, there were twelve rooms. He noted that those windows were all shuttered. Even the Germans in Spain follow the Spanish custom of sleeping without air. Or were they afraid something might come through those windows?

The boat rocked as the Spaniard leaped to the patio step and vanished into the darkness. Davie turned back to Maripaz. Her face looked set in the light reflected from across the river. He took her hands. "There's not too much danger here," he said. "We'll have it all done and will have returned to Fuentepiño by daylight." He saw her lips tighten and he knew she didn't believe him. "I shall be back," he ended.

Climbing to the patio, he waited until Hildebrand reached his side. It was all a matter of timing now; of stealth and surprise. From across the river the music of an accordion shut out the human gasp Davie knew Explosivo's knife had just caused in the darkness.

Hildebrand balanced a grenade in one hand, a revolver in the other. He was grinning nervously. "I'd like to meet that censor from Burgos," he whispered.

Davie silenced him and for a moment his own attention was set upon the roadway beyond the Villa. He saw the long, sleek shape of a German touring car parked there. He listened a moment. There was no sound from Explosivo. That meant all was well. He nodded toward the door opposite the patio, moving toward it with the loose-bodied silence of a big cat.



THE ground floor of the Villa was divided into terrace, dining-room and a large studio-office. He remembered it well from the old days of the war. The German files would be on the ground floor, in the office. They had simply taken over an office which had once been used by the Republic. But first, there would be danger upstairs.

A single, dim bulb glazed the second floor hallway with yellow light. Davie scanned the hall and the rows of blank-faced doors on each side, then moved down stealthily to the first door. His feet, in Spanish canvas, *alpargata* sandals, were as silent as moss. Hildebrand came behind. He carried his shoes in his hand.

The journalist's nerves drew taut, seeing Davie loosen his automatic from the wrist straps. "I saw some brandy downstairs," he whispered. His voice was paper thin.

"Wait—" Davie grabbed him, held him back. He shot a furious glance at the American. Was Hildebrand going to queer him now? He guessed not. The American shivered, but more from strain than fear.

Davie put his ear to the first door panel, listening. He waited there for a minute that seemed packed with hours. Finally he eased the door open and, without entering, felt inside for the light switch. There was a snicking sound as his fingers touched the switch and abruptly the lights within the room shaved down the bare white walls. A whiff of stale air rolled toward the door.

A man in bed sat up, gasping as though the light were cold and wet. Davie stepped in, holding his Mauser level with the man's head.

"Quiet," Davie ordered in German. His voice didn't carry beyond the door.

The German technician's eyes rolled, dismayed. They blinked wider, seeing Hildebrand in tweeds. He opened his mouth and he choked with fear.

Davie thought of the big car on the road outside. It worried him a little. He was thinking that perhaps the others from the Nazi Commission had come back from Madrid.

"Where are the others?" he asked.

"*Seben . . . zimmer.*"

"Room seven." Davie glanced at Hildebrand without swerving his gun. "Get them." He glanced at the German again. The man had pushed his blankets back and was naked. Davie leaned forward and, without emotion, slapped the sleepy, surprised man across the temple with the flat of his automatic. The German dropped back, unconscious. He was tying the man with a belt when Hildebrand came back, herding two men.

Both were in shorts and both wore expressions of frustrated anger. "Docile, aren't they?" Hildebrand grinned. He was beginning to enjoy this.

"On the floor," Davie ordered the Nazis, then to Hildebrand, "Tie them and drop the mattress over them." He glanced at his watch. It was after eleven. For a second he figured the time ahead of him. London would be waiting at one minute after midnight. The time was too short to work in comfortably.

"You looked in the other rooms?" he asked, when Hildebrand had finished.

"Yes. They're empty."

Davie led the way to the narrow flight of steps at the far end of the hall which went down to the office below. He dropped his weight on each step with exacting patience, working his way into the darkness below. His senses went out, ahead, feeling like a blind man. He knew the general arrangement here, but not the position of the desks and files. At the bottom of the steps he paused, his back pressed into a recess in the wall.

Behind him, he heard Hildebrand's breath. The American was cutting it down between his teeth. Ahead, in the big room, there was no sound. The silence was thick. "Wait," he whispered, warning Hildebrand.

A narrow flicker of star-light showed through a window where heavy curtains stood partially open. He crossed the room and closed the curtains. The only danger now would be a light showing through from the room to the outside. He glanced toward the other windows first.

There were ghosts in this room. Ghosts of the men who had pounded out news broadcasts for the Republic; men now lost across the face of the world. The sound of those typewriters tapped across his mind. Frantic appeals, he thought. He had to shake his head to get them out. Reaching the light switch, he flicked it on. Abruptly, he pushed back against the wall, feeling his nerves flatten and go numb.

Stretched upon a cot near the stairway, was the Gestapo man with the ridiculously loose collar. The man was propped upon one elbow and the expression in his postage-stamp eyes was expectant. He pushed back the gray, Spanish army blanket covering his legs, with his automatic.

"Herr Coster." He nodded in satisfaction. "Then I was correct! You were coming to Aranjuez."

THEY raised their hands above their heads, Davie near the wall, Hildebrand by the stairway. He still held his shoes.

"Drop shoes and gun," the German commanded.

Hildebrand let go. The shoes landed at his side, his pistol clattered on the steps. Davie let his own gun slip from his fingers.

Señor Leibling, the Gestapo man, let the expression on his face change. He looked smug. "I am so glad you came," he said. "It proves my thinking. When I heard you were coming into Spain, Herr Coster, I thought it might be to blow up trains. Those which carry wheat from Spain to my country. But then, I thought, the Spaniards do that themselves. And you had once worked in Aranjuez. It was something else." His eyes flashed momentarily toward the file cases. "Yes," he murmured.

Davie hunched his shoulders slightly and stared with an expressionless face. His mind fumbled through its first stunned impact, then his thoughts began easing down as he listened to the Nazi. He now felt neither emotion nor fear. It was as if a pattern of checkers had been messed and he had to replace the pieces. He thought that coolly.

It was just that simple. Did the Gestapo know that Explosivo and Maripaz were still outside? If the man didn't, he was thinking, then the next move was his.

"You are too silent, both of you," the Nazi frowned. "Something goes in your heads, eh?" He swung his stocky legs from the cot and with a quick, crouching glide, gathered up the two guns on the floor. Straightening, he tapped his stubby fingers against a strip of adhesive tape on his forehead. "This, from you, Herr Coster. Naturally you'll be repaid for it."

Davie loosened, letting the tensions in his body play out. He tried to make his expression look amused. "I'm not alone," he said. He caught the quick, warning look Hildebrand shot him.

The German stiffened. "So?"

"Guerrillas," Davie said. He hooked his head toward the windows and door.

The German grunted. The assurance in his postage-stamp eyes was less strong now. He looked at Hildebrand.

Davie smiled. He had won the first move. He knew now that the Nazi wasn't aware of Explosivo or the girl.

Señor Leibling frowned at Hildebrand, trying to place him. He was still uneasy, thinking of what might be outside. "You are Hildebrand? American journalist?" he said, going toward the partition door that opened into the dining-room. He unlocked it and snapped his fingers. "*Carbinero, venga aquí.*" He turned swiftly, his gun now leveled at a point between Davie and Hildebrand. He grunted again. "We will see about these guerrillas."

Davie's ear alertly picked up the soft scrape of Explosivo's feet beyond the partition. He felt his nerves thread out coldly. Explosivo appeared at the door. He was wearing a gray, unbuttoned *Carbinero's* jacket and carried the guard's carbine.

Señor Leibling's smudgy, neutral eyes flicked toward the old Spaniard. Suddenly, realization must have jolted through him when he saw the black peasant trousers and the *alpargatas* beneath the guard uniform. The German's gun arced; the bayonet on Explosivo's carbine flashed, cutting through light.

Davie lunged forward. His heel jammed into the Nazi, a crushing blow at the small of the spine. He felt the bones snap and heard the sharp gasp of agony. He barely saw the Nazi's face, but he caught the hot, quick flame of hate in Explosivo's eyes when the carbine-bayonet slid into the German's stomach. This was the hate Davie knew he would find in Spain. It was but one expression of it—an old man's.

Explosivo seemed to ease the Gestapo's body to the floor on the point of the blade. His features grew sad again. "They did it at Ovejuna," he murmured. "The Italians."

"*Bueno.*" Davie spoke quickly. He did it to cover his feelings. His stomach always turned a little at killing—even Nazis. But it had to be that way. He turned to the files.

Hildebrand was lacing his shoes while Davie fingered through the drawers, drawing out cards, putting some aside. When Hildebrand was through, Davie had already stacked a group of cards. He whistled, softly.

CHAPTER VII

RADIO ARANJUEZ

DAVIE'S watch read fifteen minutes to twelve. It had taken them twenty deadly silent minutes to swing free from the Villa Delicias in the boat, to drift in suspense beneath the bridge, then reach the opposite shore and skirt the sleeping town.

To his right, a narrow dirt road faded into the night. At its end, the guyed aerial masts of the radio station pointed skyward like five dark fingers of a reaching hand. Here, at this slight rise on the road, was the spot where Puig and his men should have blocked the approaches from the town, he was thinking bitterly.

His fingers ran to the papers in his pocket. The price tag of the Spanish War, he thought. And something more. Nazi hidden strength in this part of Europe was no longer a blank check Hitler could draw on at will. The figures, taken from the files, were clear. That was all London wanted.

In the darkness, he tried making out the faces of Hildebrand, Maripaz and Explosivo. This was the last time they would be together. He wondered how they felt. No time to relax now. He gave the extra grenades he carried to Explosivo.

"From here, beside the road, a grenade might stop a camion if they send troops from the barracks," he said. He knew they'd send troops. "It will not stop them long, but do what you can. Don't throw them too soon."

"*S'ta bien.*"

The old man now had five grenades hooked to his belt. Davie figured the others. He had one, Hildebrand had another, Maripaz two. They could have used an automatic rifle.

"Maripaz will be with you, Explosivo—until the first camion comes. Then she will come to the radio station to warn me."

He touched the girl in the darkness for a moment. Her warmth was there, breathing next to him, and there was nothing either of them could say. With a tightness drawn over his emotions, he went off into the night with Hildebrand.

After going a little way, he knew he had enough control of himself to speak.

"You remember the layout?" he reminded the American. "Main building. Just beyond it, on the left, the little house where the technicians stay when off duty. One will probably be sleeping there. I'll take care of the other in the main building. Use your gun and save the grenade."

Hildebrand was silent. His breath came heavily as they went up the road and Davie knew the man was thinking. He had changed. He was a different man from the ironic, sometimes naive journalist of Valencia.

He was involved now in something bigger than himself, something bigger, even, than news.

As the guard went by, he struck—his arm circling the man's throat, his knee crashing up into his back.

DAVIE went a little ahead now, crouching and walking. The yellow lights showed through windows of the long, low-slung buildings in the dip ahead. As he approached, a steady vibrant hum became audible. The power plant in the east wing. He ran in closer to the building and hugged the shadows. Hildebrand dropped beside him.

Creeping forward, they came to the main entrance of the station. Suddenly Davie dropped to the ground. Above his own, inheld breath and the furious beating of his heart, he heard a cough. A man was pacing the gravel path that went to the road. Davie suddenly wondered if they had put more guards on than British Intelligence had informed him of. The guard's boots sounded harsh in the darkness. He was at the end of his beat, coming back toward them.

He signaled Hildebrand that this was his job, then advanced softly in the shadows to meet the guard. His motions were smooth and timed, those of a hunting man. He held to one side of the path until the guard was a bare yard away. His thoughts were stripped down completely—no feelings, no reactions, only the pattern and the bare reflexes fixed for the next act.

As the guard went by, he struck. It was sudden and effortless. His arm circled the man's shoulder, his fist cut back against his throat. At the same instant he brought one knee up, crashing into the man's back. He saw the guard's elbows lift a fraction and sensed the panic running up into the man's throat.

"Hildebrand, use his belt. Gag him," Davie snapped.

Davie let the guard drop. He had already fainted. "Cover the small house when you finish him," Davie ordered. "Be quick."

He whirled toward the station doorway. With his thoughts geared to a cold, precise path of action, he loosened the automatic from his wrist bands and pushed through the doorway. The first vestibule was empty. His glance shot toward the two doors, one on each side —the studio-room and the other marked, *Controlado*.

He squeezed the knob of the control-room door and pushed inward. The narrow shaft of light that came through was blinding. He blinked for an instant. A loudspeaker inside was on and a clipped Spanish voice came over it. From Madrid, Davie realized. Falangist talking to South America. The room was empty and he stepped in, his eyes going over the bank of instruments, the wall telephone and the empty swivel chair.

Suddenly a shot echoed outside. Hildebrand! He listened for a second shot. There was none. Then his glance fell on the big Greenwich clock over the control board. It was four minutes of midnight.

A DOOR opposite was slightly ajar. It led to the engineering-room beyond. Suddenly Davie went toward it and yanked it open. In the long aisle, between huge tubes and condensers, he glimpsed a figure coming toward him. The man had a gun and was firing.

His own gun thundered in the same instant. Twice. The technician's pistol shot out of his hands, toward Davie. The man pitched forward on his face and slid a little on the concrete floor.

"Dead?"

Davie whirled. It was Hildebrand. The American looked a little green. He wasn't made to stand bloodshed, Davie thought. But he was coming through all right. Perhaps, he had found himself at last.

"I've never seen so many people killed so informally in all my life," Hildebrand added with a catch in his voice. "How are you going to feel if you've got to walk by people when this war is over?"

Davie looked at the other, then smiled. They both knew that they wouldn't get out alive. It seemed to build some warm tie between them.

Davie turned to the instrument panel in the control-room. He cut the land-line coming in from Madrid. The Falangist's voice stopped dead. The clock above the panel read forty seconds to midnight. He switched the contact to the station's studio.

"The rest is mine," he said, looking at the journalist. "You've still got a chance."

"I'm going back on the road with the old man."

"The odds are bad," Davie grinned.

"Hear they were at Bataan, too."

The telephone rang. Hildebrand looked at Davie and got a nod. He picked up the receiver and listened for a second. A clipped voice came over the wire.

"Military barracks, *Guardia Civil*, Aranjuez," it said. "The Madrid program has stopped?"

"Certainly it stopped," Hildebrand replied.

"Who is this—Miranda?" Suspicion entered the voice.

"No."

"Where's Miranda? Is something wrong? Let me speak with Miranda."

"He's dead." Hildebrand grinned at the mouthpiece.

"*Qué?*"

"*Viva la Republica,* you rat!" Hildebrand slapped the receiver on its hook. He saw Davie watching the big second hand on the clock. With a shrug, he took the grenade from his pocket and left the station.

Now, the excitement welled up within Davie. There was no way to hold it down coldly as he had done. He went into the studio-room and set the material from the German military files on the table beside the microphone. It gave him a queer feeling to face the mike. It was as though this were the last part of his life.

Twenty seconds. He took the grenade from his pocket and held it in his lap, fingering the pin. Now he began speaking, quickly and concise.

"Station EAQ, Aranjuez. EAQ, Aranjuez, coming in, London. Coster calling. Job completed. . . ."

He thought now of the excitement in London. He could see the men with the headphones, their bodies alert.

"Take down . . . In the Asturias, German 140 Brigade, mountain artillery, two batteries . . . Valdez, Company 23rd Bavarians . . . Navalcarnero, *fleigerfeldwebel,* 12 pilots, ground crew, field . . . Mallorca, air base, 105 men, sub base, 402 men, Italian . . . Algeciras, Spanish 27th *Brigada Mixta,* German staff, 22 officers. . . ."

He was conscious of his voice now. It grew angry, tolling out the reserve strength of the Nazis in Spain. This was something which had not happened overnight; this hidden force to flank an Allied second front, to besiege Gibraltar, to bottle the Mediterranean. The figures ran high and they were soaked in Spanish blood.

From outside he heard the muffled chatter of a machine gun, then the deeper explosions of grenades. He could feel the end closing in on him and the strain ran into his voice.

"Cartagena, Spanish Naval Base, 82 Nazi officers . . . Suggest plan to coordinate Spanish fleet and French, utilize Vichy African base at Mers el Kebir . . . Nazis dickering now. . . ."

The studio door opened. Davie half slipped the pin on his grenade, then stopped. He saw Maripaz and went on speaking. The girl was breathing hard. Her eyes and features were colored with excitement. The troops from Aranjuez have come, Davie thought. Could they hold another three minutes? It was a wishful hope, he realized. Explosivo and Hildebrand holding off the heavily armed military trucks. They'd break through like steel through paper.

Maripaz leaned over his shoulder. She gripped his arm tightly, almost victoriously.

"Puig is here," she whispered. "He has brought the *máquina* and six volunteers from Fuentepiño."

THE blackness on the narrow road between the station and the town had filled with the sound of battle and was pocked with explosive lights, red and yellow flashes from guns and grenades. All that Hildebrand could remember of the last five minutes was a nightmarish chaos of vivid wasp-like fire, the thunder of grenades and the sounds of explosive bullets.

The first camion had come up from the town, spilling forth a dozen soldiers. It had not tried to come through, for Explosivo had tossed a grenade which exploded ahead of it. The truck backed away a hundred yards. Explosivo had been hit in the stomach. He was slowly bleeding to death, there and at the mouth, but he kept on firing his carbine at the troops.

He was riding on guts, Hildebrand thought. It was then that Puig and the six volunteers appeared. "The machine gun—set it up by the bush," Hildebrand directed. The troops from town had established a cross-fire. Hildebrand was amazed that so many bullets should be directed at him personally, and that there were so many bullets in the world.

But he was delighted to find that he had control over himself.

Puig began howling in Catalan. "They will run an *auto blindado* through. I must have time to set the *máquina*."

At the base of the slope, brightened somewhat by the long stings of light thrown by tracer bullets, Hildebrand spotted the armored car, the *blindado*. In the rush of battle he saw Puig struggling to set the machine gun up, putting the wing belts in. The Fascists were preparing to run the armored car through to the station.

At close range, the Hotchkiss could stop the car, but it wasn't ready, he realized desperately. Suddenly a glancing blow, like a whiplash, seared his forehead; he felt his eyes growing blurred with blood. In the blur, he saw the *blindado* grind slowly uphill.

He stumbled to the road and passed Explosivo. The old man was lying still now, dead. Hildebrand felt a surge of anger. This killing of his friends was becoming something personal. He was running headlong down the road toward the *auto blindado*. It was like running through sleet the way the bullets went around him. He was going through them and he began laughing, feeling invincible.

The car came at him, looming. Its machine gun dug up the dirt at his feet. He jerked the pin on his grenade just as he stumbled to his knees. The car was almost on him now, picking up speed. He moved toward it on his knees, fast, as if he had forgotten his feet. Then the grenade exploded in his hand.

"*La lêche—*" Puig blasphemed. He saw the explosion as the American and the auto met. An instant later, as blackness closed over the point of explosion, he glimpsed the *auto blindado* lying on its side like an overturned turtle, its wheels still spinning, clawing the air. Puig crouched behind the Hotchkiss and fired two short bursts down the slope. "*La lêche—*" he repeated.

IN THE radio-room, Davie heard the heavier fire in the distance. There were two machine guns now. The muffled explosion of a grenade cut in, shaking the windows of the studio. He glanced at his watch. It was twelve after midnight. He needed three minutes. The noise outside became furious.

"Bilbao," he said into the mike, his voice hurrying. "Sub base, German staffed . . . Andalucia, Town of Monte, airfield, Nazi equipment, 40 planes. . . ."

He looked up at Maripaz for an instant. She had her back pressed to the wall now and was watching him. Her eyes were shining and she seemed strangely happy. That tugged at something inside of him, left him with a sinking feeling. He was thinking that she might still love Puig and that she had come with him just to force Puig's hand, to set him straight in his duty. Was she happy because she had succeeded?

"Manises—" he stumbled on the next sentence and had to repeat it. "Manises, airfield near Valencia, Spanish Army airforce school, 60 planes, 20 German officers and technicians. . . ." This was the end and he started pushing the mike back. "That is all. Cheerio, Coster. That is all."

He pushed back his chair. Outside, the machine-gun fire sounded more sporadic. It was the end, he thought, and still, not quite the end. There was a job on the road. He took Maripaz' arm and went to the door. The battle sounds grew louder in the darkness.

"You must go back to Fuentepiño," he told her quickly. "Back over the hills there."

"No." Her voice sounded stubborn, and he knew there was no changing it. "I'm going back with you," she added.

And back with Puig, Davie thought. He said nothing, hurrying toward the crest of the hill.

Puig crouched behind the Hotchkiss, firing the gun in jerky bursts as though it were a man gasping for life. Another man, a solemn-faced farmer, was at his side, feeding the gun. Davie dropped beside the Catalan.

"*Como va?*" he asked, breathlessly.

Puig smiled, but the smile was painfully taut as though the skin had shrunk over the bones of his face. His shoulder oozed blood where an explosive bullet had ripped a fistful of flesh away.

Below them, the Fascist troops from the town had spread out. Davie took in the picture at once. Bodies were strewn over the hillside. Groans filled the spaces between gun sounds.

"There are only two of us left," Puig grunted. "The *Fascistas* will surround us soon."

"Where's Hildebrand?"

Puig jerked his head toward the dark shape of the armored car overturned on the road. Davie looked there. It was like a giant turtle, feet stiffly outthrust. He thought of Hildebrand and he knew what kind of a man the American was.

A dark shape appeared to the left for an instant, crouching and running. Davie lifted his Mauser, fired. The shape disappeared.

"They're coming around," he said.

PUIG began breathing hard. He leaned against the gun. "You see, I have come to help," he said, his stubbornly set cheeks shining with the sweat of pain. "There is not much time. Pepe"—he nodded at the Spaniard beside him—"and I can hold the road only another few minutes." He gave Davie his first, slow, uncertain smile. "I will stay and you will go now with Maripaz to Fuentepiño. You will stay in Spain, *Inglés*?"

"I'm staying here," Davie replied. He glanced at Maripaz. Her eyes were bright, full of pride for the Catalan.

"Puig says you must go, *Inglés*," the girl repeated.

The Catalan fired another longer burst from the Hotchkiss and grunted in pain. Then he turned to Davie. "No," he said, bluntly. He was stubborn again, but without bitterness. "You both must go. There is little time.

"I am *muy burro*," Puig said. "I am one who finds it hard to forgive the *Inglés* for betraying Spain, but with my mind, I know what you are doing is right. It is right for Spain also. You must reach Fuentepiño and become leader of my *guerrilleros*. There is no end of this fighting, *Inglés*, until the end. That is my word." The Catalan turned his head toward Maripaz. There was pain in his voice when he spoke again. "She will be happier with the *Inglés*," he said, looking at Davie again. "She is in love with you and she understands you better than one who is *muy burro*."

Davie felt the Catalan's fingers grip into his knee. Warmth and friendship lay in the touch, a friendship which ran deeply under the skin of Spain. He gave a little of it back. Then he felt Maripaz' hand urging him to come away. Puig's look told him that it was the right thing, the only thing to do.

Davie guided the girl back beyond where the road ended. Together they crossed a field in silence, then climbed the gentle slope behind the station.

Reaching the crest, Maripaz paused. Davie saw her stare back. Standing there, he knew she was listening to the rifle-fire on the road. Puig's machine gun gasped once or twice, then suddenly its voice died out. Then, a moment later, a single shot sounded. The silence held now.

"Puig—"

Davie saw that the girl was crying. Then she turned her back to the road.

NO FINER DRINK . . . with hot dogs . . .

PEPSI-COLA

Energy . . . in the big big bottle

GOOSE LOAD

By HAROLD TITUS

TO GET the feeling Hoddy had when Ray Chalk got jerked up for murder you'll have to know how it was between them.

It started back when Hoddy was about twelve and too little to get old

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

Someone sneaked in, looking for that report . . .. Dad heard him, stepped in from the kitchen and was killed.

Ben's rattle-trap twelve-gauge up to his shoulder right.

He was poling the big marsh, early in duck season. It was a bright, hot afternoon and so still that ducks mostly got up away ahead. He was so bent on meat he didn't notice anything else, let alone this man thirty-forty rods off standing in his skiff and watching him across a rice bed.

A pair got up out of cat-tails right close and Hoddy grabbed the gun but they were teal and he didn't shoot. It was a good thing he didn't, too. He'd have plastered them all right, but he'd have put out a couple of big, fat black ducks to boot. They were around the bend and a shot would have spooked them away out of range.

As it was, when his boat nosed in sight there they were, and before they got their necks stretched out he had the gun in his hands and when they jumped he had his cheek scrooched against the stock, and when they flopped there at the top of their bounce, like a black duck will, he was dead on the furthest and let it down, bill over kelter.

The other climbed high and fast and being so spindly the kick had spun Hoddy off balance and by the time he got set it was a long, tough shot. Most would have called it too long, but Hoddy knew that left barrel and held high for the climb and that bird crumpled, and hit the water *ker-sock* around the bend.

Now, Hoddy knew ducks will crumple and still have life enough to get into the marsh and be gone for keeps. So he poled fast, passing up the first one because it wouldn't move again, but when he made the bend there was the other, feet twiddling in the sunshine. He picked it up, his right arm jumping like toothache because he couldn't scrooch close enough to sight if he put the butt against his shoulder where it belonged but had to rest it on his muscle, and there wasn't much muscle so it whammed tar out of his arm bone.

HE was grunting from the hurt when this man paddled into plain sight. The first thing Hoddy thought was he might be a warden and he wasn't old enough for a license and he stopped poling, wondering could he take it across the marsh afoot and get away.

But the man spoke before he tried.

"That was a swell shot, kid!" he said.

Hoddy didn't answer. Spite of the grin, which was good and friendly, that might be a dodge to get in grabbing distance.

"It was a tough angle and he was away out," the man said. "But you sure had him right in the middle of your pattern!"

His voice was quick and rough but there was something down under.

"Guess mebbe," Hoddy said, feeling safer.

"You passed up a pair just before. Were they wood duck?"

Hoddy had a feel the man knew they hadn't been wood duck but answered regardless.

"No. Them was teal. Green wings."

"Looked like an easy shot. Easier than that second black."

Hoddy rubbed his arm. "A teal's hardly a bite," he said.

"Pot hunter, eh?" The man's blue eyes twinkled.

"When you've et fish since spring, you better be!"

Hoddy couldn't figure what made it easy to talk to this tall, sandy stranger. Generally he didn't talk much. Generally nobody tried to get him to, he being old Ben Blake's kid and living off on the marsh and not mixing with anybody but Ben's cronies when he went to town. Those who did try to make him talk didn't get far, but this man was different. He didn't have any palaver like most have when they try to worm talk out of somebody. With birds and things Hoddy knew why one was different from another from little feather markings, or what a nest is made of, or a sign something leaves. But it was harder to tell why one man wasn't like another. Maybe it was this one's eyes. Maybe because even if he called Hoddy "kid" he didn't talk like he was a kid.

Hoddy picked up his other duck, the man drifting along by him. He asked about the marsh and Hoddy finally sat down and rubbed his arm and answered his questions.

Were there fish in the ponds and creeks? Why, sure; pike and some bass. How about deer? Quite a lot; more every year, seemed like. Muskrats? Couldn't he *see* the houses, getting built high now? Did geese stop here on their—

"Geese, mister? Hell won't hold 'em! Say, their yelpin' keeps you awake!" Hoddy let go all holds and his face lit up so that the man laughed. "They on'y roost here. They feed in fields along the river bottom and up in the hills when the's grain. This sure's goose grounds, mister!"

"You look like goose was your middle name," the man said.

"They give a hand fine creeps," said Hoddy, shying up again after making what for him was a speech. "An' when you got a goose, you got somethin'," he said, flushing from the way the man looked at him, like he was studying something over.

Hoddy stayed back in his shell after that even if the man did keep right on talking as if he was twice as old.

"Well, you'll want to get some more, now," the man said finally, picking up his paddle.

"Uh-uh. They won't keep—an' I on'y got three shells, anyways."

The man looked at his curly red hair and big brown eyes and his freckles and torn shirt and the split gun stock bound up with copper wire.

"Now you got more," he said and tossed over a box of shells. They were sixes and a good heavy duck load and Hoddy! You got a letter!" He read. man grinned and dipped his paddle and said s'long and be seeing you.

A box of shells when you've got only three is a lot. And when your old man can't buy meat until trapping time, and when you've lived on fish since spring... Why, nothing could have made Hoddy more swirly inside than a box of shells from a stranger.

He thought about it all evening; and all next forenoon when he was fixing up his goose blind with sumac growing around it up in Denoyer's buckwheat patch. Hi Mallon's man was digging a pit blind in the corn field beyond the fence which meant that hunters from Mallon's resort would be in there after geese came down and that bothered him some but not enough to kill his good feeling about those shells.

NEXT time Hoddy saw Ray Chalk was in town. He and old Ben always went in on Saturday, walking it the three miles. Sometimes they lugged fish worms to sell to Mallon's resort. Once in a coon's age they peddled berries and in fall they had fur to sell and in winter fence posts to dicker about, but mostly they went in for Ben to sit in the taverns and tell about how good he was and get full.

Hoddy didn't like town but if he didn't look after old Ben nobody would and Joe DeGraw, the sheriff, would run him in or he'd go to sleep on the road. He didn't like town because folks looked at him as if he was something you didn't see every day. Besides, there wasn't anything to do like there was on the marsh except look at things in stores—and when you didn't have any money, what was the use?

The Saturday after the box of shells Hoddy was looking in the hardware window. Hi Mallon was talking to a clerk in the doorway when the stranger Hoddy'd talked to drove by.

"Who's that dude?" Hi asked the clerk.

"That's Chalk. Ray Chalk."

"Oh, so *that's* the party!" Mallon's little eyes got mean and he rolled the cigar fast in the corner of his fat mouth. "Did he buy that lake frontage or is that just talk?"

"Oh, he bought," the clerk said. "Paid cash, too. He's already started his cabins. Looks like you'll have competition, Hi."

"Well, I been in the resort business ten years," Mallon growled. "He'll get his belly full in a hurry. I'll see to that, fella!"

Ray Chalk, then, was his name. And he was starting a resort, and Hoddy hoped he wouldn't get his belly full but a lot of trade away from Mallon. Just then Hi stepped out from the entrance and saw him and stopped short.

"Say, kid," he said, "I hear you're fixin' a blind in Denoyer's buckwheat."

Hoddy looked at him but could only swallow. There was something about Mallon like a squall coming.

"I got them hill fields leased," Mallon said. "I'm puttin' blinds in for my customers. You just make yourself scarce around there," he said and went on and all the beezum drained out of Hoddy because his place was the best goose ground in the country. He'd figured that out from watching geese fly since he could remember. He'd had a blind there two years and if he couldn't hunt in it again everything he'd planned on would go up the spout. He sure felt bad and he started off, trailing his finger ends along the window.

"Hullo, kid!" somebody said and he turned around.

It was this Ray Chalk; he'd parked and come along and heard what Mallon said. Hoddy said, "Hullo," kind of husky.

"How're the ducks?" Ray Chalk asked and Hoddy said they were all right he guessed and walked on because he almost wanted to bawl.

Next Saturday when old Ben got his mail, which was generally a price list from a fur buyer, he said: "Why, lookit, Hoddy! You got a letter!" He read, "Hoddy Blake, care of Ben Blake!" on the envelope.

It was the first letter Hoddy had ever had.

Friend Hoddy, it said. *Mallon was running a whizzer. He leased the corn field but not the buckwheat. Now the buckwheat is leased, all right, but to Hoddy. Ha, ha. Your friend, Ray.*

Another sheet of paper was in the envelope. It started out, *For due consideration,* and was a three-year lease on Denoyer's piece.

"Why, boy, you got old Hi where the hair's short!" Ben cackled and hurried down to the tavern to tell how Ray Chalk had called Mallon's bluff and keep telling it until away after dark.

Well, things like shells and a lease. At first they were little things, you'd say, but big ones for Hoddy. They made him think Ray Chalk was the finest man ever set foot. The geese came down and Hoddy took the decoys he'd made out of plywood from a box and dime-store paint

The other climbed high and fast and by the time he got set it was a long, tough shot.

and got a goose every now and then and when Hi Mallon passed him in town he sort of swelled up and looked thunder and lightning.

Ray Chalk took Hoddy out to see his new cabins on Little Boy Lake, too. And got him talking about things as if he was twice as old, and by spring when Hoddy would even see Ray Chalk his heart would start helletylarrup, the way it did when geese straightened out and headed for his blind. His feeling that way was what made Ray's being even suspected of murder so hard for him to take.

THE next summer Ray bought bait from Hoddy and paid more than Hi Mallon ever had and charged his customers less, too. And he gave old Ben a dress-

ing-down for borrowing from Hoddy instead of working himself and got after both of them about Hoddy and school. He'd never gone to school much but Ray talked him into starting again and fixed it so he could catch the bus out on the pavement, which was only a mile. Hoddy went to school every day until he had his fight, which was on account of Ray Chalk.

Now, Hi Mallon had been all worked up about Ray's camp. He'd been mad as a trapped bobcat about Ray leasing the Denoyer piece for Hoddy, too. And the tourists liking Ray and telling about it made him kind of desperate so he did some looking up and found this story and began spreading it.

Chalk had done time, the story said. He'd been in the pen, it said. He was a gangster and a friend of gangsters and what kind of party was that to have in a decent neighborhood?

"Just ask him!" Hi would say whenever he got a crowd together. "Just *ask* him!" he'd say, rolling the cigar in the corner of his fat mouth. "He won't deny it. He *can't* deny it! He had a resort down Detroit way until they pinched him and sent him over the road. Just *ask* him!" he'd say.

Of course, nobody asked Ray but they figured Hi must have something or he wouldn't talk so strong.

The talk got worse with the weather and made something screw up tight inside Hoddy. He'd never liked Hi Mallon even before he lied, trying to run him out of his goose blind. He paid low prices for bait and tucked it on to tourists. He was forever letting Tod Hatch hang around his place to sell fish and game to dudes who had bad luck and would rather break the law than admit it. Tod always had a trammel net on good bass grounds in summer; he'd get a quarter of venison any time of year for ten dollars and he'd sell partridge or ducks or anything and everybody knew he'd sell his mother if anybody wanted her and she was alive, and yet Hi let him hang around. Still, nobody yipped about it because Hi was prominent. He was always busy at elections and such times and had money out on mortgages and while outside he seemed to be jolly and friendly most of the time, he was hard and mean down under.

So between feeling as he did about Ray Chalk and knowing about Hi, Hoddy was all tight inside.

Even the kids got spreading the story and one morning before school the bigger ones were saying that Ray Chalk ought to be run out and Hoddy went in swinging.

He was smaller than any of them but he knocked one flat and another through a window before they got him. They got him harder than kids generally get another. They had to to keep their own blocks from getting knocked clear off and that's how Ray Chalk found out about it.

He showed up at the shack on the marsh before Hoddy's cuts were well. He didn't even let on he saw them at first. Old Ben tried to start talking about the fight but Ray kept changing the subject.

He got talking to Hoddy about a new live box for minnows and the two of them went down to the pond, leaving Ben stretching a beaver skin, and then he could say what he'd come for.

"This dirt about me's all wrong and it's all right, Hoddy," he said, not talking as fast and as rough as usual. "I'll take what comes to me and not squeal, but I owe telling you about it, seeing you fronted for me.

"I have been in the pen," he said, with sweat coming out on his lip. "I have done time," he said, and Hoddy's middle felt empty.

"But they had me wrong," he said, and pulled out some folded newspapers. "They had me wrong and admitted it."

He drew a long breath and his hands shook a little.

"I had a lake resort down state," he said. "I did well. I had a lot of regulars who came almost every week-end. Among 'em, as it turned out, were some gangsters. I didn't know that. I never guessed it. They acted just like regular folks when they were with me, but they were bad. Oh, plenty!

"The law caught up with 'em," he said. "It caught up with 'em at my place. It got them, and it got me, too," he said and swallowed.

"They charged me with harboring criminals. I'd done my best to run a decent place but a man with a resort can't always know his customers. So they got me. And tried me. And found me guilty," he said, "because the only two guys who could prove I was on the up-an-up about these gangsters couldn't be located."

He waited a minute, as if going on was work.

"They gave me a year," he said. "They put me away. I served just ten days when my lawyer located these guys. He went to the judge, and he saw how wrong they'd been and how right I'd been and—" He shrugged. "Well, here I am!"

He handed over the newspapers with his hand still shaking.

"I wanted you to know," he said. "You're the only one I care a damn whether he knows or not. You read these and see if I didn't give it to you straight."

Hoddy hadn't understood it all but one thing he did understand was that Ray Chalk was the finest man that ever set foot.

"I don't need to read nothin'," he said, almost as if it made him sore. "I don't even need to have you say it," he said. "I knew it wasn't so from the start." He felt all cut up because Ray'd figured it was necessary to explain.

When Ray asked Hoddy to go to work for him that summer, Hoddy r'ared back. "Me?" he said, his voice crackling from surprise. "Me around *tourists?* Gol'," he said, rubbing his knees briskly, "I wouldn't be any good. It's just like givin' me things or keepin' Hi Mallon off me." He'd gotten so he could talk almost a blue streak to Ray. "All's I ever learnt about is like marshes and what lives in 'em and—"

"That's a swell start on learning anything!" Ray told him. "If you can learn about folks same way you've learned about fish and birds and such you'll get up there in a hurry!"

SO Hoddy kept the boats pumped out and the dock slicked up and measured out bait for customers and slept in a cabin with Ray. He found it wasn't so different learning about people as it was, say, about geese. You watched and listened and saw what came of what they said or did and sometimes it would surprise you.

Ray's cabins and boats were good and tourists liked him but business wasn't much to brag about. People in town put some stock in the story Hi Mallon had spread and didn't break their necks exactly to send strangers to Chalk's, so it was nip and tuck.

Ray had built anchor blinds and hoped to have duck hunters after the fishermen quit coming. Hoddy could stay right through fall. He could help mornings and week-ends and go to school in town.

"And you'll get some shooting, too," Ray promised. "One thing, your goose blind's almost on the way to school. After we get our hunters out you can get up there and get in a shot or two before you have to haul out for town," he said.

Hoddy tried for a goose several mornings after they started coming down but didn't have any luck. Rye was planted in the big field where Mallon had his pit blind and most mornings some of his customers were in it and not many of them were goose hunters and shot too quick and kept the geese shying off. Denoyer had planted corn where he'd had his buckwheat, and even if the shocks were little and scattering on account of the land being so light and sandy there should have been good hunting but there wasn't, because of the greenhorns. The fact is, two greenhorns spoiled shots for Hoddy the morning before Dad Dudley, Gierson's cook, was murdered and the very worst trouble Hoddy could think of for Ray Chalk got started.

Gierson was a Detroit automobile man with a nice place on Little Boy Lake, around the point from Ray Chalk's. You either went around by water or walked through the timber and there you were.

Dad Dudley looked after the Gierson place, cooking when anybody was there and choring around when he was alone. Usually, nobody was there in the fall but one day, right at the peak of the duck flight, these two dudes showed up.

They hadn't come to hunt, though. One was an engineer and the other his secretary. The engineer was getting up a report on how to make a trailer the army wanted to haul a gun on. It was a complicated job for the factory; the engineer'd gotten all his notes together but needed a quiet place to go through them and write up his report for the army.

Those two worked all hours, day and night. That was hard going for them, it turned out, because both were duck hunters and out on the lake the guns whanged away from sun-up to four o'clock and made them all itchy.

By Friday they knew they were going to wind up their job Saturday night so about the time Ray Chalk's hunters were trailing in they walked over through the woods to reserve a blind for Sunday.

"Just for the early flight," the engineer said. "We'll start for Detroit by noon."

Ray fixed them up with a blind on a weed bed just half a mile off Gierson's and they went on into town to buy shells and get licenses. Just usual things for Chalk's customers to do, understand, but packed with dynamite for Ray because they were strangers and in little towns strangers are easy to watch and there was special interest in these strangers, as it turned out. Especially in their plans to leave the Gierson place alone.

After he'd helped get the hunters off Saturday morning, Hoddy legged it along an old road that ran through the timber into the hills and came out near his blind. Decoys were out in front of Mallon's pit, he could see, but he set his own and ducked into the blind with his heart going lickety-split because the old honkers were already yelping away off. Down in the river bottom somebody opened up and his mouth got all dusty, waiting.

Geese wanted to come into that rye and scraggly corn patch the worst way and three-four times some headed straight for Hoddy and even set their wings to light but, every time, these customers of Mallons would open up when they never had a chance. Both had pump guns and they'd let go all three shells the law allowed 'em each to have, even if the geese were almost a hundred yards from them, and the old Canadas just began to flap again and went yonder.

Hoddy got disgusted and went back to Ray's. He found plenty to do but was a little mad because every now and then he could hear those two guns being emptied and just ached to be up there alone. More geese were coming in all day long and for anybody who knew the game it would have been fine hunting.

Plenty others got their geese. Ray sent Hoddy in town along late on some errands and he found a gang in the hardware store talking it over. Two youngish fellows had one between them, a customer of Mallon's had dropped two and Tod Hatch was blabbing about his luck.

"Took my three afore eight," Tod kept saying and Hoddy thought to himself that the old renegade didn't stop then. Not just because he'd killed his limit. If geese kept coming into the river bottom corn field where Tod hunted, he'd killed until they quit, Hoddy, thought, and felt pangy because he'd missed out.

The two who'd had Mallon's pit came in. They'd been around over a week and called each other Red and Shorty. They'd been hunting ducks before and might as well have kept on for all the good they did with geese.

"Boy, did we shoot!" Red said to the clerk. "We shot our guns hot without pulling a feather! Give us about four boxes of sixes so we can try it again tomorrow," he said.

While the clerk got the shells, Red saw Hoddy.

"You pulled out too quick, son," he said and grinned. "Right after you left three went straight into those corn shocks."

"Want to rent that blind tomorrow?" Shorty asked.

"Uh-uh," said Hoddy. "I aim to shoot myself."

Shorty's gray eyes narrowed as if he didn't like that and he brushed at his little, light-colored mustache and turned on his heel and walked up front, sort of marching, and Hoddy thought that if he wanted to get sore because he wouldn't rent out his blind, all right. Even if the big rye field did pull the geese that

way and the corn brought them down, hunters who didn't know any more about geese than they did wouldn't have a chance.

THE wind came up that night and light was slow in coming. Ray Chalk had to tow the pair from Gierson's to their blind with an outboard because they'd never have found it in the dark and that left Hoddy to get the other boats on their way so he was late getting started for the corn patch.

Lights from the Gierson place twinkled through the trees. Maybe he could have heard the shot that killed Dad Dudley if it hadn't been for the wind. He was killed just about then, the coroner said.

He heard voices in the pit blind while he set up his decoys in the soft, sandy soil and half wished he'd told this Red and Shorty something about goose hunting. It might have done him some good.

As it was, he gave them their first shot. A nice flock came towards him and veered off. They were a long ways out and he figured they were passing him up so he fired and missed. They swung over the rye, then, and somebody shot and Red popped out of the pit and ran through the decoys and picked up a goose and Hoddy said "By gol' " to himself because it certainly was a long shot. Just a scratch kill, it was so far out.

He got himself a goose an hour later. A flock of eight and this bunch of three circled at the same time and the three came his way, talking it over among themselves and setting their wings and drifting in about an inch an hour, it seemed, and looking as if they were in range long before they were, he knew. He let them drop their feet and then rose up and gave it to them.

A big old honker went down and tried to get up and couldn't and flapped off through the corn shocks with a broken wing and Hoddy pelted after it and shot twice before it finally flattened out.

Down by the pit they'd been shooting again as he ran. *Bump-bump—bump—bump,* the guns said. *Bump-bump—bump—bump,* they went again just as he got up to his goose. He picked it up, panting hard, and looked its plumage over and thought how Ray would grin when he carried it in and got prickly all over as he always did when he got a goose or thought about pleasing Ray.

Shorty had gotten himself a goose, too. It had likely gone over their heads and set its wings and gone down in the timber. He was just climbing through the fence at the edge of the timber carrying it and waved to Hoddy. Feeling pretty good, getting a goose, Hoddy thought. Not sore any more because he wouldn't rent his blind. He could be sure it was Shorty because his hunting coat was old and faded. Red's was bright new.

If he'd known the goings-on back at Ray's right then, he wouldn't have been thinking any such things. He would have been as scared as—well, as scared as he was that afternoon when he finally gave it up. It wasn't any use staying after he got that one goose, as it turned out. Red and Shorty kept shooting at anything in sight, almost. A single or a pair or a little flock would start looking over the rye and they'd unlimber. *Bump-bump—bump—bump,* their guns would go, and the geese would say to each other that this was no place for them and swing and climb and go out of sight.

It was about one o'clock when Hoddy started home, goose over his shoulder, never dreaming what waited for him.

Dad Dudley's nephew had found him right after eight o'clock. He was on the living-room floor, dish cloth in his hand, shot in the chest.

Joe DeGraw, the sheriff, was out there in no time. They got hold of Ray Chalk and brought this engineer and his secretary in from their blind but before they landed a crowd was there, with Hi Mallon managing things, the way he would.

The engineer took one look at Dad and went right to a table and picked up a big envelope and riffled papers in it.

"There's a copy missing!" he said, and so it was something besides just another murder. It was the government's business.

They'd made four copies of that report, understand. Somebody'd known

what their job was; somebody'd wanted to get hold of the plan for making that trailer. Whoever it was, knew that that morning was their one chance and had sneaked in after Dad was alone. He'd heard them, likely, stepped in from the kitchen and been killed.

THE long-distance calls certainly were thick for a spell. In just a little while the G-men were on their way from Detroit by plane and by noon they were hard after Ray Chalk.

You see, Ray couldn't prove where he was. Everybody else in the neighborhood could. Most of the duck hunters were in pairs, or anyhow in sight of each other, but Ray had been out on the lake alone. To make matters worse, on the way back from the blind where he'd towed the engineer and his partner, his outboard quit. The two in the blind had heard it quit but couldn't see, it still being dark. Ray didn't claim to have gotten back to his dock until after seven and no one was there to see him.

But Hi Mallon was on hand and there was that story about Ray and the gangsters and when the G-men got into town Joe DeGraw already had Ray in the jail office, combing him over.

Like a nightmare, it was, for Hoddy. With G-men going over Ray's register and checking up by long-distance some names they found there. With state police all around. With Joe DeGraw talking loud while the top G-man questioned Ray Chalk. With Hi Mallon saying once a gangster, always a gangster and he'd been telling them all along!

Time would scoot for a spell, and then crawl. Now and again everything got almost blank for Hoddy. The clearest times were when Hi Mallon was rubbing it into Ray for benefit of the crowd.

"Been a gangster hang-out, I tell you!" he said once. "Has from the first. And a gangster'll smuggle army secrets as fast as he will booze or dope. They'll get him!" he said, rolling his cigar. "These feds are smart!" he said, and some of the crowd nodded and Hoddy went cold.

How he got into town, he never knew. Somebody gave him a ride, likely, in one of his blank spells. It didn't seem like Sunday. It was like Saturday, with so many in town. Hoddy walked up and down. He didn't even crowd around like most did when some hunter drove into town and the G-men and state police talked to him to see where he'd been, early morning. Everybody who'd been loose in the country was being checked up. Hoddy got feeling more and more desperate. There wasn't anybody he could ask questions of about Ray Chalk, even.

"There he is!" somebody said. "Hey, you, Blake!" It was Mallon. "Come here, kid!" he said, and beckoned. He was with Red and Shorty beside their car and a G-man was with them.

"All day long," Shorty was saying when Hoddy got there, with men crowding in behind him. "We got out about six, or a few minutes after. We had our geese by nine but kept trying for more."

He pulled two geese out of the back seat, holding them up by their necks. In the light from store windows a daub of red mud showed on the breast of one where he'd socked the ground.

"Listen, kid," Hi Mallon said. "Were you in that blind of yours?"

Hoddy couldn't speak. Things were batting around in his head. He swallowed and nodded and answered the G-man. Yes, he'd been in his blind before it got light. Yes, he'd heard these men there. Yes, he saw them going in and out of the pit. The G-man said O. K.

"Want to check up on us back home in Toledo?" Red asked.

That was the idea, the G-man said, and they gave him names.

"Will it be all right if we hunt up there tomorrow?" Red asked. "We just got a taste of it today!"

It would be all right, the G-man said, and Hoddy began to sweat because he could help Mallon's customers prove where they were and couldn't do a thing for Ray Chalk. Not a thing!

He listened to men talk, with more things batting around in his head.

"If they find that report it'd cinch their case." . . . "Whoever it was, is gone from here!" . . . "Naw—runnin' off'd be a dead give-away." . . . "They're off on the wrong foot about Chalk, I'll bet."

. . . "Don't be too damn sure! He's got a record." . . . "The feds only talked to him a little; it's Joe DeGraw keeping after Ray and Hi's behind that." . . . "The feds won't overlook any bets; they can take up with Chalk again any minute."

Hoddy wanted to yell, hearing such things.

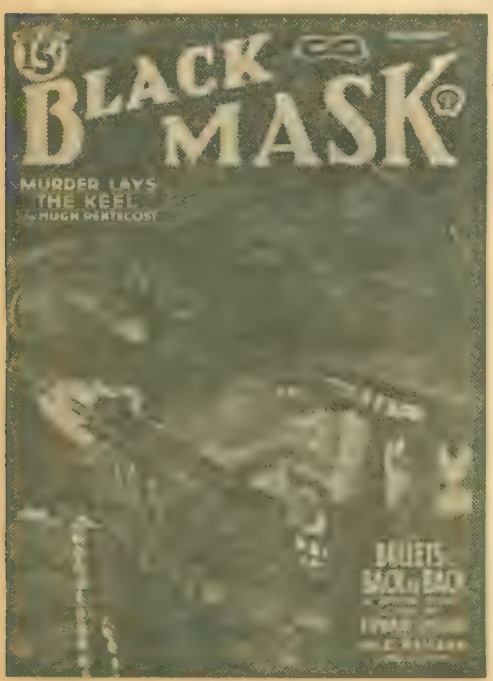
It got late, but town still looked like Saturday. Ray Chalk's customers were all there, standing around. Red and Shorty came back from supper and Red got a recoil pad fitted on his gun in the hardware store, which had opened up, and stood on the steps with it under his arm and talked about goose hunting instead of the murder and Hoddy wished he could ever think of goose hunting again.

He had to get out of there. He almost started back to the marsh to hole up with old Ben but didn't. He walked out to Chalk's and things began to bat around in his head again, like pieces of a puzzle he couldn't sort out. He knew he wouldn't go to sleep. He just kept feeling those things swirling around in his head and knocking together until it got light and somebody began to shoot, away down the lake. Then it seemed as if somebody was shooting right up close—*Bump-bump—bump—bump*—but nobody was. He was sitting up in bed and it was almost noon, the sun was so high, and a feeling in his throat that choked him. He'd gone to sleep, after all.

"By gol'," he said after a minute or two and swallowed hard because those things rattling around in his head were quieting down and falling into place and fitting . . . almost.

It was two o'clock when he walked up into the woods. He went so slow it was half-past before he got to the rye field. He sat down under a hemlock and pried those things in his head apart again and made them swirl around. Then he stopped them and made them fit, like gears in a car, while Red and Shorty shot again at a lone goose that wasn't in a hundred yards.

When Red and Shorty came out of



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their pit at four o'clock, he walked out, the old rattle-trap twelve-gauge under his arm. They were surprised to see him. They hadn't known he was there, they said.

"You better unload them guns," Hoddy said when Red started to pick up the decoys. "The warden, he's particular about quittin' time. He might be around."

"Good idea," Shorty said and pumped out his three shells. Hoddy counted them: one, two, three. Red pumped his gun. Out popped a shell. Just one. It made a little plunk when it fell on the ground.

"Could I ride out with you?" Hoddy asked. "You can drop me off clost to Ray Chalk's."

"We won't be going to Mallon's, son," Red said. "We're going into town and right on. If they'd wanted to ask us anything more . . ."

Hoddy was tight as a drum inside. His belly ached, he was so tight inside. He swung the old twelve-gauge on the two of them.

"Pick up them guns!" he said. "But don't make any funny moves to load 'em! I got goose loads an' they'll cut you in two!"

It seemed like a whole minute of silence.

"What the devil—"

"Have you gone nuts, kid?" Shorty demanded.

"Mebby," said Hoddy, steady enough even if his lungs were all fluttery. "But you turn around and walk straight for the road." He scrooched his cheek up against the stock, ready to pour it into them.

Now a kid can't tool two men down a county road at the point of a gun in broad daylight without plenty of people taking notice. Plenty did.

A woman saw and hustled to the telephone and a state police car came hell for leather.

"What's this, kid?" a trooper snapped, falling out of the door.

"Hold it!" Hoddy croaked to Red and Shorty. Then he said: "That paper you're lookin' for. . . . Try th' magazine of Red's gun."

Shorty tried to break but they nailed him. A trooper knocked Red's gun out of his hands and opened the magazine and ran his finger in and said he'd be damned. . . .

HODDY sat alone in the jail dining-room. They'd run him past the crowd and slapped his back and told him to wait. Outside, he could see Hi Mallon talking, with motions. He could even hear him say over and over, kind of whimperish, that nobody in the resort business could know who they took in . . . . It was kind of funny.

Then Ray came in and they didn't say much.

Then the top G-man came in, grinning. The Toledo build-up had been smart, he said. Last night it looked all to the good. Now, though, the Toledo office had shot it to pieces. Shorty wasn't even a citizen and Red had been a card-sharp on ocean ships.

"It's a natural," he said, and sat down beside Hoddy. "It's spying or sabotage and you cracked it, son, and now tell me how!"

Hoddy drew a long breath. He was weak, being relieved for Ray.

"They shot wrong," he said. "First day, they shot six times at ever'thin' in sight; all th' law allows pump guns. After Dad was dead and that paper gone, they shot four. *Bump-bump—bump—bump.* Like that. Was the' anythin' th' matter with Red's gun, now, whyn't he get it fixed in th' hardware store last night? He got a recoil pad but he didn't say nothin' about his action not workin'.

"Besides," he said, "he kept that gun in his hands. They was in town all evenin', but he carried it, instead of leavin' it in the car. That made the gun somethin' special. That's how it was."

"Ye-e-e-es," the G-man said. "But that was only a guess."

"Well, the' was another thing," said Hoddy. "I was so kerflummoxed by Ray's bein' in trouble I overlooked it. See, them hills is all sand but one o' them geese had red clay on him where he hit. And Tod Hatch, he hunts the river bottom where the's clay and night before Dad got killed he was advertisin' all

over town he had geese hangin'. They bought 'em from him, sure's you're a foot high."

The G-man nodded. "That makes sense," he said. "But a good many buy game to make their lies good, don't they?"

"Sure!" said Hoddy. "But they pretended to *me* they killed 'em. They knew I'd be there Sunday 'cause I wouldn't rent my blind. Knowin' I was there before it got light, Red talks so's I'll hear an' think they're both in the pit. They bought from Tod night before, likely. When they—or Red—set their decoys he laid these dead geese out amongst 'em. So Red he shoots, an' then runs out and picks up one. Then, when I'm chasin' a cripple, Shorty comes out the brush carryin' his, see? Likely, it was him shot Dad. Likely he walked up through the timber an' waited for a chance to pretend to me he'd only just then run out, an' they sure had me fooled for a while. I should've knowed better, but they sure had me fooled plenty for a while!"

The G-man rubbed his chin.

"Why?" he said. "It won't add up. Why should you have known better?"

"Don't you *see?* When Red picked up his goose, I *thought* it was a long ways out. If he killed it, it dropped dead or I'd 've seen it flop. But when he run back to the blind it must've been seventy paces. And I knew they was shootin' Number Six shot. And to kill a goose stone-dead away out you better have a goose load. You got to have Two's," he said, "and if I hadn't been so kerflummoxed by Ray's bein' suspicioned I'd have figured it all out long before I did."

The G-man looked at him a long time without talking. Then he looked at Ray. Then he put a hand on Hoddy's red, curly hair.

"Under that mop," he said to Ray Chalk, "there's a goose load, and you better believe it!"

Hoddy didn't quite know what he meant. He didn't know, either, whether he felt good or bad. He wasn't mixed up from what the G-man said, but from the way Ray Chalk was blinking . . .

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SEASONED IN SAIL

By ROLLAND LYNCH

HE HAD hung around Pearl Harbor for four months of this war begging them to let him do his bit. Every sailor in the islands, from out-rigger canoemen to four-stripers in the USN, knew he held papers to command, in sail, any tonnage on any sea in the world; for at one time or another they had stopped in his Seven Seas Bar and listened to his wind-and-canvas yarns while tossing off an Oak or Sansoe. They knew his name was Lorimer Hildreth of Gloucester, but that men under sail had called him "Bully." That must have been the shellback's way of making fun of Lorimer. He looked no part of a bully. He was small and narrow of shoulder, stooped a little from handling heavy lines in his youth. His face was wrinkle-ribbed like a sampan's sail and the same dirty brown color from tropic suns and fevers. His eyes were that

At this moment the deck lifted beneath his feet. An awful wave of concussion threatened to crush his skull.

placid blue the sea takes on after its storm has blown out. At the recruiting office they kept saying that this was a young man's war, but he always countered that the sea hadn't changed.

They didn't quite understand how he felt. At first he had not thought this was his war; it was so far to the other side of the world. So since 1919 he had been content to lean his elbows on his bar and spin yarns with his seafaring patrons; that and continue his stories of an evening with his grandchild on his knee, his pipe aglow in his mouth and his dog, Bilgewater, curled at his feet. That was before the dawn of December 7th. Then there was only rubble with Bilgewater lying there amid the crumbled mortar, his teeth bared as though his last bark had been in defiance of the enemy whose stealthy steps he alone had heard. Lorimer had packed his duffle bag then and patted his grandchild on the head. He kissed his daughter and told her to send the news to her husband who was in the army, stationed at Manila, that Lorimer Hildreth was going back to sea and do his bit; and that maybe he would be seeing him soon. Then as he followed the curve of the bay out to Pearl Harbor his thoughts were of Bilgewater, those lips drawn over his teeth in a snarl.

So Lorimer was there in front of the Maritime Office when new crew lists for the dangerous job of getting supplies to the United Nations were posted. Amid the haste and confusion his name was down as mate of the tramp steamer, *Bering*. They were sending him out. It was his first ship since the clipper *Valkyrie* had gone to the boneyard.

HONOLULU was black as a pitch barrel's bottom as Lorimer shuffled along the water front this tropic night. The ragged skeletons of bomb-gutted warehouses were stark against the clear night sky. High overhead flickered the huge southern stars.

Lorimer turned the corner of the long warehouse and got his first look at the *Bering*. He stopped, steadying his duffle bag with a horny left hand and tightening his teeth on the stem of his unlit pipe. She wasn't large, about five thousand tons, but there was a graceful sheer to her forepeak and a nice overhang to the stern. Her bridge broke the sweeping line of her deck and behind that stretched the cabin houses. She was painted gray-black, making only a silhouette against the night. Her fore and aft Samson poles towered like clipper masts, but were made ugly by the long arms of cargo booms elbowing supplies aboard. Lorimer swept the rake of the hull again and said to himself, "Might have been built for sail," and went down the dock.

At the gangplank a marine challenged him sharply. Lorimer produced his papers and the guard felt for the raised Maritime seal with his thumb. Excitement was having its way with Lorimer as he looked up toward the deck. He dug for a match to light his pipe.

"No lights," said the marine brusquely.

Lorimer snapped the match in two and went up the gangplank.

The watch on deck demanded, "Who are you?"

"The new mate," answered Lorimer. The smell of oil was strong in his nostrils and the steel deck plates beneath his feet felt slippery with it. This was different from the clean tar-and-rope smell of a sailing ship.

"Yes, sir. Captain's expecting you on the bridge."

Lorimer turned up the deck, steadying his duffle bag with his hand. Yes, this was certainly different. His nose crinkled with repugnance. He found four men clustered outside the pilot house. "I'm Lorimer Hildreth," he said, "the mate."

"Captain Corrigan," said the commander gruffly. "Belcher, Cogswell and Engineer McClintock."

Lorimer shook hands around. It was good to feel again fingers made strong by wheelspoke and rope.

"Your last ship?" asked the captain.

"The *Valkyrie*."

"*Valkyrie?*" The Old Man struggled with his memory. "I mind a Gloucester clipper *Valkyrie*. Might be using the name again; transfers to other flags and all. Can't keep up these days. I don't know her, Mister."

"The same *Valkyrie,*" said Lorimer

proudly. "She tied the seventy-nine day run of the Yankee from Canton to Liverpool in the old days."

There was silence. Lorimer could feel the men staring through the darkness at him. "You the Hildreth who runs the Seven Seas?" asked Second Mate Belcher incredulously.

"Ran," corrected Lorimer. "She was a direct hit."

The captain found his voice. "I'll be damned. Saloon owner; the same *Valkyrie,* indeed! I'm to take a ship through sub zones with—with a shellback out of sail; and the *Bering* without enough canvas to diaper a baby. . . . The Maritime Commission must be stark mad!"

There was silence again and those eyes kept boring through the darkness.

Lorimer said defensively, "I figure the sea's the same, sir—sail or steam."

"You—you figure— Damn my eyes! If we didn't have to shove off immediately. . . . Get to your stations, all of you! By Gad! The *Valkyrie*—" He stormed into the pilot house.

"Your quarters are below, Mister," said Cogswell and indicated the cabin on the deck beneath his feet. "No lights, mind. Don't even strike a match. Those two-man subs, you know."

LORIMER went down and put his duffle bag inside the door, then went forward. He stumbled over dunnage that was strewn about the deck. Pretty untidy; and they were hollering at *him.* When he had gone to sea. . . . Steamers, he reminded himself, were different. There was no quick cant to the deck once you got under way like there was in sail. And you didn't need all hands at the braces. The crew would clear all this up after the lines had been taken in. He weaved his way past the canvas-covered gun and reached the forepeak. He spoke to the group of silhouettes clustered at the bow. "Bosun?"

"Aye, sir."

"We'll be shoving off in a moment. Best you take a couple of turns of the bow line about the capstan." He'd show them on the bridge that he knew his business. Sail or steam—

"Capstan, sir? The iron of her is in some tank by now. Ain't a capstan left in the fleet."

Lorimer felt the crew staring at him now. He looked around and saw that the capstan had been removed to make way for the gun mount.

"I can take a turn on the nigger head," suggested the bosun.

He was about to explain what he meant when Lorimer said, "The nigger head," and shoved his hands deep into his pea-jacket pockets and pulled his head down into his collar. The men were moving slowly, glancing back over their shoulders at him. Distrust was as thick as the darkness. He'd just told them he hadn't been to sea in a long time. Any sailor would be quick to recognize the fact. And when a man's life hung by the narrowest of threads these days officers had to be. . . .

A megaphoned voice floated gently down from the bridge, "Let go for'ard." Then muted: "Let go aft."

The lines came in and the slow throb of the *Bering's* engines took up. Like a black witch afraid of the dawn, she backed out of the slip and entered the fairway. Lorimer stood by until the sea swell began to lift the deck beneath his feet. The crew was huddled by the forward hatch murmuring among themselves. Lorimer sent them flushing with a command to clear the dunnage off the deck.

As he climbed toward the bridge, he felt his age for the first time in sixty-seven years. This steam packet was different from anything he had ever known. If she were only sail. . . . He paused and looked at her slowly arcing Samson poles. She could have been built for sail, all right, she had the lines. He would have been right at home if canvas billowed from those masts. For out there the black water heaved and surged and whispered its age old song. It was the same old sea, sail or steam. That was reassuring.

The pilot house was dark. He opened the door and went in. Quick light blinded him and it was then he knew the windows were painted black, too.

The captain swore. "Who in hell . . . ? By God, I should have known. Mister, you knock before you come in that door

again; or any other door. The Commission, faugh!"

Lorimer's cheeks burned.

"Did you station your forward lookouts?"

Lorimer turned.

"Never mind," snapped the captain, disgustedly. "The bosun has sense enough for that. The *Valkyrie*, indeed! Mister Hildreth, you'll stand an eight hour watch with Mister Cogswell and Mister Belcher each on four with you. This ship must make her landfall in spite of her officers. Time is of the essence. We've bungled too long as it is. Now, Mister Cogswell, see here we meet the convoy off Oku Point of the Island of Niihau. . . ."

Lorimer saw that he was dismissed as both men's heads bent over the spread chart. And he knew what overlapping watches meant. The Old Man had no trust in him. He stood there for a moment scrubbing his horny palms together. He wanted to say that the sea was the same in sail or steam, but it was this damn war that was different. He didn't quite understand all the new rules. Now under sail. . . . His Adam's apple worked a couple of times, then he said, "Going on the bridge." The captain shielded the lamp with his hands as Lorimer went out.

The wheel house was black as a well bottom. The quartermaster at the wheel was only a blocky outline. Second Mate Belcher moved out of the shelter of the starboard bridge-wing and ranged alongside of Lorimer.

"Ticklish business, what?" he said in a voice shot with tension. "Those little subs and airplane carriers most anywhere . . . ."

"Pretty ticklish," agreed Lorimer. "When I—"

"Guess it was in your day, too," interrupted Belcher, "when they thought the world was flat." He turned and moved to the port bridge-wing.

Lorimer stared after him, his legs wide braced. Belcher was gone into the darkness before he could think of a reply.

Lorimer went to the starboard side and propped his elbows on the rail. He got out a match and was going to strike it, then he remembered. He broke it in two. By Glory, he wished the world *was* flat. He could light his pipe.

Down below he could see the heads and hunched shoulders of the seamen lining the rail every fifteen feet. He guessed that must be hell down there so close to the water like that where every little white cap could be caused by a torpedo or periscope. You weren't any safer up here, but you were spared the anxiety because you couldn't see those things at night.

He moodily watched the way the forefoot folded the water aside and the way the deck canted slowly back and forth from the sea swell. It was good to smell the salt air and the dampness and feel the crust of them form on your face. Nothing here had changed except the rules. Well, the old dog would just have to learn new tricks. He could see the defiant snarl on Bilgewater's rigid jaws as he lay there amid the rubble of the Seven Seas.

DAWN caught the *Bering* off Kauai Island and it was Lorimer's watch below. He went down to his cabin and stowed his gear, stumbling a little because he wasn't used to the steamer's lurch. It was different from that of a sailing ship. And inside the acrid smell of oil was worse. It came up through the floor plates. This was like going to bed in the gas tank of your car. It made him a little sick. As he lay down and closed his eyes he felt badly used and knew then that he had been a tight wire all through his watch. He wondered what kept the young men from going stark mad, tensed like this all the time. He guessed maybe they all had something personal like Bilgewater to drive them on.

The *Bering* plowed through blue-gray combers and tropic rain squalls toward rendezvous. Lorimer stood his watches, but he might as well have been a passenger. The captain had no word for him. All his orders were directed to one or the other of the mates. There was no conversation. The scrape of a shoe was enough to make a man jump and curse the offender. Orders were, "Mouths shut and eyes open." When that duty

was done sleep was all that mattered.

It was the third day when Lorimer saw the water breaking unnaturally two points off the starboard bow. It turned his stomach hollow and made his mouth dry. He glanced quickly around at the helmsman and second mate, but they had seen nothing. Quietly, he slipped out of the pilot house and went down the starboard ladder. He knocked on the captain's door and entered at the gruff summons.

Lorimer respectfully scrubbed his cap from his head and said, "I think there's a submarine to starboard, sir. Not wanting to alarm the crew—"

"Not wanting to alarm— You think what? Good God, man!"

With a lunge, the skipper left his bunk and shot past Lorimer. Lorimer blinked his eyes and gazed after the captain. He went up the bridge ladder like a monkey clad in long woolen underwear. In a second the ship screamed with sirens and bells.

Lorimer stood outside of the cabin and watched the results. A yelling crew tumbled from the forecastle and began yanking the cover from the forward ordnance. At the stern a bunch of scantily clad seamen rolled huge barrels out on runways and stood ready to let them go. Port and starboard torpedo tubes swung out, grim-faced men bent over them, teeth bared. The *Bering* began lurching in zig-zag fashion. The officers scrambled to the topmost bridge and scanned the water with their glasses. Lorimer joined them. He noticed the speed of the ship had increased until it seemed that its propeller would be whirled from its shaft. The deck plates crawled beneath his feet from the forced draught.

For a full hour no one spoke. Nor did the vigil relax. The men were like wax figures at their stations.

Captain Corrigan stepped to the engine-room telegraph and rang the engines down. He clamped on headphones. The expectant men sagged a little against their weapons. The *Bering* wallowed along silently now, losing headway.

Cogswell's youngish face was white. Belcher's lips moved. Then they all spun as if struck as the radio man stepped onto the bridge. The captain took off his headphones.

"They flashed an O S," said the radio man.

Everyone breathed again.

The captain turned to Cogswell. "One of ours," he said. "Sound the all clear."

Cogswell went unsteadily down the ladder to the pilot house. A muted horn blared. The crew began falling away from their stations, swinging their arms and working their necks to get the cramped tightness out of muscles. The torpedo tubes came in and the crew aft gingerly rolled the depth charges back toward their chocks. The bunch forward slowly put the cover back on the gun. The captain faced Lorimer, his legs wide braced.

"Mister," he said heavily, "it's only your age that keeps me from knocking you down. It's time you knew this ship is more important than the comfort of the crew. This is war. You're relieved of your watch. Get below!"

Lorimer stammered, "Why. . . ?"

"You haven't sense enough to sound an alarm. Coming to me and saying you think—*think*—there's a sub on our bow. By the time you got around to telling me, if it had been the enemy, we'd all have been in Fiddler's Green."

"We always used to notify the captain first—" began Lorimer.

"Your day is done," said Captain Corrigan. "You'll please me hereafter by keeping to your cabin and the immediate deck. The Commission—" He stomped off swearing luridly.

Lorimer jammed his gnarled hands into his faded pea-jacket pockets and his fingers came in contact with something small and hard. He gripped it as a man grips a railing when in deep pain. The mates brushed past him and went back to their stations, leaving him a hunched and forlorn figure.

Lorimer kept staring down at the deck, his weather-cracked lips turned with bitterness. Relieved of his watch; and he had so much wanted to be a part of all this. He guessed he should have listened when they told him he didn't fit in any longer, that this was a young man's war. Relieved of his watch. Slowly, he went down the ladder to his cabin and fell

heavily into the chair. He saw then the thing he had found in his pocket and held now so tightly in his hand. A dog biscuit, the tidbit he had always carried for Bilgewater. He was glad the dog wasn't here now to see his disgrace. He wished he had a noggin of rum. He could do with one right now.

THE *Bering* picked up the convoy off Oku Point and the fleet of ships turned southwestward. Lorimer watched from the rail outside of his cabin as the gray, salt-crusted ships fell into threes abreast with two lean destroyers nipping at their flanks. His heart swelled at the sight. It was the age-old order of communal strength when men brought together muscle and metal to face the common foe. He marked the rake of one destroyer. Must be one of those new ships the government was so rapidly commissioning. He held tight to the dog biscuit in his pocket.

He stayed on deck throughout the day watching the fleet follow the prearranged crazy course; the sleek destroyers ranging far and wide, white mustaches beneath their sharp curious noses. Twice planes were catapulted from their decks to go winging around in the sky.

The night came on clear and moonlit. To the south lay a fog bank that would have been more than welcome, but there it stayed, tauntingly. Several men passed Lorimer as he leaned against the rail and he heard one say softly, "Great night for tin fish," as he went onto the bridge to begin his watch. One of the others turned back down the deck. Lorimer would have spoken to him, but the man did not even look in his direction. Lorimer flicked a bead of moisture from the end of his nose and started toward his cabin. He rolled the dog biscuit between his fingers.

It was at this moment the deck lifted beneath his feet. It was as though his legs were being hammered up into his body by giant mauls. He was thrown across the deck and smashed hard against the cabin wall. There was a flash of lightning right in his eyes. An awful wave of concussion threatened to crush his skull. He rolled into the scupper, stunned, blood trickling from his nose. The biscuit was clenched tight in his fist.

The deck was aslant when Lorimer got back his senses. The ship listed sharply to port. He clawed his way along the hand rail toward the bridge. He got up the ladder, then stopped with mouth slack.

The full force of the concussion had swept the bridge. Captain Corrigan was slumped against the weathercloth, his arms hooked over it holding him in an upright position. His arms swung like limber pendulums with each stricken lurch of the ship. In a corner of the starboard bridge-wing, Cogswell, the Third, sat like a Buddha in prayer. He was quite dead without a visible mark on him.

Lorimer stared stupidly out to sea. The convoy was streaking away in the darkness, scattering toward the fogbank like frightened quail. The destroyers were racing over the edge of the night laying their depth charges that erupted terrible geysers and made the darkness growl with thunder. As if dreaming, Lorimer became conscious that the Second was on the bridge. He wore a red mask. There was an ugly gash across his forehead. McClintock, the engineer, was behind him, his broad face twisted with pain. He held to a grotesquely bent arm that was black as a piece of stove pipe. Their talk rushed into Lorimer's ears.

"We'll have to abandon quick," McClintock was crying. "She took my engines and half my gang."

The Second pawed at his bloody face. "How much time we got?"

"Half hour at the most. Bulkheads won't stand any longer."

"All right, Mister, get your men to life boat stations."

"Wait," said Lorimer. He had not raised his voice, but the authority in it made the two pause. "I'm master here now."

"You were relieved—" began the Second. "No time for arguing."

"There's time," said Lorimer curtly. "I'm the only man aboard with master's papers. If the *Bering* will float for a half hour we can salvage some of the cargo."

"How?" swore the Second. "Put it on rafts? The rest of the convoy is scattered from here to hell. Keep out of this, Mister, you don't know the rules. Nobody'll be back and we can't use our radio. McClintock, get your men to stations."

Lorimer's eyes flared. "You've forgotten the prime rule, Mister. The ship's the thing. It comes before the comfort of the crew. Leave her while she'll still float?" That wasn't seamanship. Hell! he'd been in worse spots than this; lee shores with all anchors dragging. He drew himself up to his full height. Here was his chance to do his bit and they weren't going to take it away from him. "The *Bering* is supposed to make a landfall and I'll see that she does. This is war. Mister McClintock, go below and see about strengthening those bulkheads. I'll have the pressure off them in an hour."

The engineer stared at him queerly. "Crazy mad," he mumbled.

"I've heard that engineers fancy they can run the captain," said Lorimer. "I'll stand for none of that. Get below."

There was enough of the bully in the old man's command to turn the engineer and send him down the ladder. Belcher stood there with his mouth open.

"Stand the crew to," barked Lorimer. The Second jumped. Lorimer turned to the quartermaster who was just picking himself up. The concussion had missed getting in behind the wheel with its awful force. "Will that wheel respond?"

"I don't think so, sir." The quartermaster moved groggily and gave it a flip. It spun free.

"Get aft to the poop deck and rig the emergency gear," ordered Lorimer. "Lively now."

ON THE bridge alone for a moment, Lorimer looked at the forward Samson poles. He could do it. By everything that was holy he could do it. She looked like she was built to sail. He passed a shaky hand across his brow and looked at the *Bering's* dead commander. Captain Corrigan would want to remain on the bridge for this. Lorimer went down the ladder to the foredeck, conscious of the fact now that he had been holding to the dog biscuit all the time. He was on the bottom rung when the Second led the crew up. They were a motley-looking lot, half dressed and nursing cuts and bruises.

"Bosun," said Lorimer, "get some winch cable from the store room forward. You there, dismantle two of those cargo booms. Mind you leave the schooner guys intact. Some of you get the canvas off the hatches. You, rig a halyard to

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the top of the Samson pole. We're going to rig squares'ls and club haul this ship to Jubal's shores if we must." He said it confidently, sure of his ground now.

The men just stared, mouths slack. "Jump!"

They turned grudgingly away, shaking their heads. Belcher didn't move.

"I'd appreciate it, Mister," said Lorimer, "if you'd shut your mouth and open your eyes a little more. Get aft and see how the emergency steering rig is coming."

Then Lorimer took off his jacket and pitched in with the crew. He was at home now. Cargo booms came down and were taken off at their bases. When the crew saw Lorimer climb the Samson ladder like a monkey and call down for them to haul up one of the dismantled booms, they fell to with a will. The little old man up there was beginning to make them believe he could do it.

They muscled the giant arm up. Lorimer bound it into place, then skinned out on the teetering yard and wove the hatch cover into place. The schooner guys at each end of the arm were led down as braces. They were clewed to the mooring bits there on the deck.

The canvas bellied in the wind. Lorimer stood looking at it. His hand, the skin barked off all its knuckles, stole into his pocket and touched the dog biscuit as he got himself a match. He lit his pipe and puffed deeply. It was a crude rigging, but it was drawing. He ordered his men aft.

With a shout, they followed him up the ladder and over the bridge to the after deck. Lorimer needed little patience now. The crew worked on their own initiative. The next thirty minutes saw the crude squaresail set. For a moment it hung lifeless. Then it cracked out and filled with wind. The *Bering* heeled gingerly to starboard and lifted the jagged torpedo hole partly out of water. The ship took steerageway. Lorimer's hands trembled a little as he relit his pipe. Belcher was shouting that the rudder was working. McClintock stuck his grease-smeared face out of the engine-room companionway long enough to yell, "I can keep the bulkheads from caving now."

Lorimer, aching in every muscle and feeling every one of his years, climbed wearily to the bridge and plotted a course. Then he turned to Belcher who had come up. "I fancied she was built to sail the first moment I laid eyes on her," he said. "Here's my course, South by a quarter East. We'll hit the islands somewhere. Warn the helmsman to keep her well off the wind. I think we can relieve the Old Man of the bridge now."

"Aye," muttered the Second. "Now that he knows the *Bering* will make her landfall."

Lorimer nodded. "Fix up your head and return and take over, Mister Belcher. See that the crew and engine force get patched up. I'll have to coil down soon. I'm old and tired. This is a young man's war."

And Lorimer leaned heavily against the weathercloth as Belcher took the body of the dead commander below. He stared out into the darkness. It was a fine feeling. The deck was canted just right and there was a surge of life in the hull beneath his feet. The sea hadn't changed a bit. He brought out Bilgewater's biscuit and tossed it into the air, catching it and tossing it again. . . .

DEVIL DOGS OF DIXIE

A Fact Story

By

H. G. RUSSELL

A hot fight ensued on the deck of the Underwriter.

COMMANDER JOHN TAYLOR WOOD, Confederate States Navy, stood in the stern of the dory, his head bowed and uncovered, reciting the Lord's Prayer. Mumbling the words uttered by their devout leader, the sailors and marines in the assembled boats rested on their oars or leaned

on their muskets while the chill February rain poured out of the heavens as if in answer to their supplication. Secrecy was essential to the success of their daring venture. The darkness of the night, the rush of the rain, all conspired to aid the Confederate sailors and marines in their attack on the Union gunboat *Underwriter* anchored in the Neuse River within thirty yards of the Federal forts which guarded the town of Newberne.

It was early in the year 1864, but the hopes of the Confederacy were growing dim. The ships of the gallant and spectacular navy of the South had been driven from the high seas, bottled up, captured, and destroyed. In North Carolina the coastal defenses were in the hands of the Federals. Success, it was hoped, would make the victors less vigilant. In an effort to regain control over the North Carolina coast by placing new Confederate warships in the rivers and sounds of that area, a bold scheme was hatched to take the Federals by surprise, capture their largest ship on patrol, and with it attack the smaller craft on the station. Thus the Confederate Navy would acquire new sea legs; its sailors and marines would again take their battle stations, even while waiting for the ships which were under construction to be launched.

Commander Wood had been selected to lead the expedition. His force consisted of picked crews for each of the six boats and a company of marines under Captain Thomas S. Wilson of Missouri, formerly a first lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. The expedition entrained at Wilmington, proceeding to Kingston where the boats were unloaded from the cars. Rowing down the winding ways of the Neuse River, Commander Wood's party pulled the loaded boats, each carrying its quota of marines, a distance of sixty miles. At midnight the expedition arrived within sight of the town of Newberne. Here the boats were beached on a small island; and, for the first time, the purpose of the expedition was revealed to the men who had volunteered without greater knowledge of their mission than its extremely hazardous nature.

AFTER rations had been eaten and ammunition issued, the boats were again pushed into the stream, and with muffled oars they cautiously approached the Federal gunboat *Underwriter*. Final instructions had been given immediately before the prayer, and every man was tense in anticipation of the desperate task to be performed. Out of the night the black hull of the *Underwriter* suddenly arose. The steps of the watch could be heard as the Confederate boats glided forward through the darkness. Five bells tolled aboard the *Underwriter*. The Confederates were within a hundred yards of the Federal gunboat when the watch hailed them. Only silence greeted his "Boat ahoy!" But by then the gray-clad figures loomed up out of the darkness.

The watch gave the alarm which hastily summoned the gunboat's crew to their quarters.

Instantly all was activity aboard the gunboat. The engineer was ordered to get up steam and run the Confederates down, but before this could be accomplished, the attackers were boarding forward and astern, the sailors armed with cutlasses and pistols, the marines with muskets and bayonets. A hot fight ensued on the deck of the *Underwriter*. The Federals were drawn up in the ways aft of the pilot house, firing volleys of musketry into the ranks of the boarders.

Captain Wilson rapidly formed his Leathernecks on the hurricane deck. They fired at the flashes which revealed the position of the crew, then with fixed bayonets charged down the deck, driving the Federals before them. Down the companionways, into the wardroom, even to the coal bunkers, the Confederate marines pushed, forcing the fighting and attacking an adversary which outnumbered them three to one. When the bullet and bayonet were unavailing, the rifle was used to club out what resistance remained.

Meanwhile, the Federals on shore sensed what had happened. Their batteries began to pour a rain of shells on the ill-fated gunboat. Her heroic commander fell, her machinery was crippled from shell-fire, and although the Con-

federates, now in complete command, were able to man her guns, they could not sail her out of the range of the Federal batteries. They decided to abandon the ship with their prisoners after setting it afire.

Over the sides of the gunboat, back into the dories the sailors scrambled with the marines herding the prisoners. Up the Neuse and again into the night went the phantom forces in gray. They had had their hour of victory, one fourth of their number having fallen on the blood-drenched decks of the Federal warship. Back to the upper reaches of the river Commander Wood's party retreated. A victory had been theirs; but, in spite of heroism and well-laid plans, the Confederates had failed to fully accomplish their mission. True, a Federal gunboat had been destroyed, one mounting four guns—an eight-inch, a six-inch, and two twelve pounders—destroyed by valiant sailors armed only with pistols and cutlasses and hardy marines who fought with rifle and bayonet. But the Confederate Navy was still ashore. Its seamen and marines were destined to resume the role of infantry once more.

WHO were these Devil Dogs of Dixie, who came out of the sea, scrambling aboard the *Underwriter* to turn the tide against the hapless Federals in one of the most heroic actions in naval annals? They were members of what is perhaps the least-known military organization in America, the Confederate States Marine Corps.

While the history of both the Confederate States Army and Navy has been written with completeness and brilliancy, the story of the Devil Dogs of Dixie remains as one of the most obscure chapters in American history. The Confederate marines are truly the Lost Battalion of the Civil War. Yet, the Leathernecks in gray were in there fighting during many a fiercely waged battle on land and on sea. True to the traditions of the Marine Corps, they rolled up an enviable record. Performing the duties of gun crews aboard ship, of landing parties, of coast defense garrisons, and serving as infantry and artillery with General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia after all of their ships had been literally shot from under them, the Confederate marines earned a more conspicuous place on the roll of valor than time and circumstance have seen fit to allot them. Had they been recruited from any one locality, had they been organized and commanded by some political bigwig, as were many regiments that took part in the Civil War, volumes might have been written on their exploits. But they entered the Confederate service from all parts of the South, from ships and naval stations on both coasts. The entire Corps, speedily organized, consisted of but one regiment. Its paper strength had been set at 999 officers and men. By the fall of 1864 its losses had reduced it to 472 of all ranks, in spite of replacements. Never operating tactically as a regiment, the Devil Dogs had been split into many small detachments which were scattered over the high seas and the land and waters of the Confederacy. As a result there is but scant reference to the deeds of the Southern Leathernecks.

In the majority of engagements in which the Confederate marines fought, while they were commanded by their own officers, these marine captains and lieutenants were in turn subordinate to higher army and naval officers. They had to depend upon these superiors in rank for whatever recognition they received. When the Confederate marines were mentioned in the official reports, there were citations for gallantry, coolness under fire, or some similar laudation. But often they were lost in the heat of the engagement where there was no one to witness their struggle against overwhelming odds.

By a curious coincidence the papers and records of the Corps were similarly consigned to oblivion. During the closing days of the War a fire swept the building in Richmond which served as the headquarters for the Confederate marines, burning to ashes the reports of the officers who commanded the marine detachments throughout the South. The result is that comparatively few officers in the service today, including officers of the Marine Corps, are familiar

with the history or even the former existence of the Confederate States Marine Corps.

Richmond was bustling with warlike activity on a certain day in May 1861 when a group of former United States Marine Corps officers held a meeting to discuss plans for organizing a Confederate corps of marines. Almost all of the sixteen officers who had resigned their commissions in the parent organization attended. Many had made their way with difficulty from ships and stations in the North to the newly established capital of the Confederacy, hoping that they might serve their state in the capacity for which they were best fitted by training and experience.

There was a special note of buoyancy at that meeting not wholly attributable to the excitement of the impending conflict. By a curious twist of fate more than a hundred enlisted men, sergeants, corporals, and privates, had gravitated to the capital in the hope of running into their recent commanders. Although the reunion was a purely spontaneous one, it was for that reason all the more welcome to officers and men. Both groups had been anxious to enter the service of the Confederacy, but neither officer nor enlisted man could do more than hope that that service would again make them marines.

All soon learned that the Confederate Government had authorized the establishment of a marine corps. Although many of the Leathernecks who attended that meeting could not have known it previously, the first steps had been taken to put the Corps on paper in Montgomery before the capital had been transferred to Richmond. In attempting the difficult task of creating a navy overnight, a task made doubly difficult by the lack of a seafaring population and the necessary material resources, the Congress of the Confederacy had not overlooked the place of a marine corps in that navy. The Act of March 16, 1861 provided the necessary authority for the creation of the Corps. But the Devil Dogs of Dixie actually sprang into existence as a result of the amended Act of May 20, 1861, which specified a full regiment instead of the two battalions previously contemplated. This was good news to the officers at the meeting, for it assured all of a berth in the only branch of the service for which they could immediately be imbued with *esprit de corps*.

SUCH a group of optimistic Leathernecks as met that night could hardly be expected to foresee that the name and deeds of the Corps were about to be lost to posterity; that they were to become the forgotten men, the unknown soldiers of the Confederacy. For on this May evening in that old building down by the James the rafters re-echoed to the shouts of laughter and the jubilation as old messmates met. The one hundred veterans who crowded the hall that night provided just the cadre of enlisted men needed to give the new corps solidity and to weld it into a compact amphibian fighting unit. Young friends and relatives were sworn in; the veterans filled the non-commissioned ranks; and the outfit was soon stepping smartly about Richmond to the tunes played by its own fife and drum corps.

As the 999 stalwart Leathernecks contemplated by the Confederate States Congress in its plan for a marine corps were transformed from a paper estimate to flesh and blood realities, the veteran marine officers moved up a rank or two, and it soon became necessary to appoint additional officers from civil life, a few of whom had served for a short time in the Confederate Army. The colonel commandant of the new Corps, Lloyd J. Beall, had, in fact, been an officer in the regular army before the War.

To get a paymaster the Confederate marines went to the United States Navy, neatly lifting Richard T. Allison, a Kentuckian, from the Washington Navy Yard, where he was busily engaged making out Federal vouchers. After the riots in Baltimore, the place he called home, he offered his resignation to Secretary of Navy Welles, but that gentleman found it difficult to replace Paymaster Allison immediately. He therefore requested him to stay on the job until his successor arrived. This was a mere matter of six weeks while all hell was breaking loose south of the Mason-

Dixon. Who will be bold enough to say that the pen is not mightier than the sword, at least to Secretary Welles; for, unlike the unfortunate marine corps captain, Robert Tansill, who was arrested by the Secretary's order as soon as his ship docked, Paymaster Allison was not clamped in the brig when he made known his future plans. Instead, after turning over his accounts to the new Federal paymaster, he was permitted to fold up his folios and quietly drift away. He shortly found his way to the seat of the Confederate Government where the marines handed him a major's commission. Far from being a landlubber, Allison had sailed the briny deep, having pushed his pen across the Pacific into Chinese and Nipponese waters. He had accompanied Commodore Perry on that famous Japanese expedition which subsequently changed the course of history, leading directly to the clash in the Pacific today. Even to such a well-traveled outfit as the marines, he was an acquisition.

In many respects the Southern Leathernecks were lucky in their ability to draw key officers to their standard. The adjutant of the United States Marine Corps, Major Henry B. Tyler, cast his lot with his native state of Virginia, immediately becoming the lieutenant colonel and executive officer of the Confederate marines. The adjutant of the new Corps was Major Israel Greene, who as a lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps had distinguished himself in the raid on Harper's Ferry that resulted in the capture of John Brown. While the Devil Dogs were commanded by a soldier, paid by a sailor, they were fed and clothed by a marine. Major Algernon S. Taylor, a former captain in the U. S. marines, was appointed quartermaster and chief of commissary. All these officers might have obtained higher ranks in the Confederate Army, but their loyalty to the marine corps was so strong and the service so active that they had no time to think of laurels to be won in any other branch of the Confederate armed forces.

All the captains but two were veterans of the marine corps, but these two, Captains Reuben T. Thom and A. C. Van Benthuysen, very shortly proved that what they lacked in experience they more than made up in personal courage and ability to lead troops under fire.

Captain Thom comes on the scene in the first months of the War. When the Confederate Government was making strenuous efforts to build a navy at New Orleans to close that port to the Federals and defend the Mississippi at its mouth, the officers of the *McRae,* one of the ships being fitted out at New Orleans, became impatient for action. They hastily armed improvised gunboats and set out of the port with a picked crew of volunteers, including a detachment of marines under Reuben Thom, then a lieutenant.

The sailors and marines landed at Ship Island below New Orleans where they erected batteries by placing some of the guns from the Confederate steamers behind hastily constructed redoubts, Lieutenant Thom being second in command. It was not long before his detachment was in action. The Federal ship *Massachusetts* steamed in and began shelling the Confederates before they had time to unload all their supplies and ammunition. Fortunately, for the Confederates, the *Massachusetts* failed to get the range. The shells fell short, landing in the sand before the trenches—almost none of them exploding. The Devil Dogs rushed out and, digging the unexploded shells out of the sand, they used them in lieu of the ammunition they had been unable to unload to return the fire. They scored four major hits, three in the hull and one on the deck. The Federal warship beat a hasty retreat, leaving the gray-clad sailors and marines in possession of the island. The expedition resulted in clearing the lower river of Federal launches and in permanently fortifying the island. A garrison was sent out to take over and the Confederate marines returned to New Orleans to join their ship now ready for sea.

A GREAT deal has been written about the historic duel between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac,* but in all the glowing accounts of that epic fight one hears no mention of the Confederate marines. Yet, there was a squad of Devil Dogs

aboard the Confederate ironclad on that memorable March 9th of 1862, and they played no passive role in the sea clash. The same Reuben Thom, by then a captain in the Confederate States Marine Corps, had volunteered for service aboard the converted Merrimac, which the Confederates had renamed the Virginia. With him he took a squad of his Leathernecks who were assigned to one of the guns. Captain Thom himself had command of a gun division, using as one of his gun crews a Virginia militia outfit, the United Artillery of Norfolk. In the battle that ensued a shell from the Federals struck the muzzle of one of his guns, but his men continued to serve the partly shattered ordnance without stopping to pick up the pieces.

It was a motley collection of sea dogs with a generous sprinkling of landlubbers that sailed into Hampton Roads to terrorize the Federal fleet. The *Merrimac* carried as many sailors as Captain Buchanan could find, but the number of experienced seamen was so inadequate that he was more than glad to welcome a squad of marines. The rest of the crew was made up of volunteers from the Confederate Army, who like the Norfolk militiamen had signed on for the trip just to see the fun, little realizing that they were about to make naval history and that many a foreign admiral was to lose more than one night's sleep over their two days' work. Captain Thom and his Devil Dogs were indeed blowing naval traditions to bits. As a result of his untiring and fearless work in the two-day fight, the marine captain was cited for intrepidity. His previous experience had stood him in good stead.

The evacuation of Norfolk by the Confederates and the retreat of their fleet up the James River to Drewery's Bluff soon ended the career of the spectacular *Merrimac*. Not designed for shallow water and without a base to effect the needed repairs by which she could be made seaworthy, Captain Tatnall, who succeeded to her command, was compelled to destroy her on May 12th about two months after the historic battle to prevent her from falling into the hands of the Federals. He landed his crew. Captain Thom and his marines rejoined the Corps at Drewery's Bluff where they assisted in the defense of Richmond. Having fought the *Monitor* in Hampton Roads, Captain Thom's same squad of marines helped work the guns on the Bluff as the *Monitor, Galena,* and *Naugatuck* attempted to ascend the James.

In this engagement the companies of Captains Van Benthuysen and Meire won citations. The two marine companies were entrenched on the Bluff within two hundred yards of the Federal gunboats. Relying on their skill as sharpshooters, they fired at the crews, directing their aim into the portholes of the gunboats. They succeeded in hampering the efficiency of the Federals, driving the gunners away from the batteries by the sharpness and accuracy of their fire.

One of the same companies under Captain Van Benthuysen fought with great gallantry in the defense of Fort Fisher. Falling back from gun chamber to gun chamber, the hardy Devil Dogs who formed a part of the garrison of Battery Buchanan, battled all night against the combined attack of the Federal land and sea forces until all fifty were killed or captured.

The fight at Drewery's Bluff took place on May 15, 1862. Up to this time the Confederate marines had been concentrated in and around Richmond, assisting in the defense of the Confederate capital then threatened by Major General McClellan in the famous Peninsula Campaign. Shortly after the engagement at Drewery's Bluff the Corps was broken into small detachments and ordered to various stations throughout the South.

Although it is not generally known, several detachments were placed aboard Confederate cruisers and raiders, venturing into European waters. Lieutenant Beckett K. Howell commanded the marine detachment aboard the *Sumter,* which sailed out of New Orleans on June 30, 1861. He later had the same assignment aboard the famous *Alabama* under his old skipper, Captain Ralph Semmes. There were marine guards aboard the *Atlanta,* the *Tennessee,* and the *Gaines* commanded by Lieutenants Thurston, Raney, and Fendall. Aboard the ram *Stonewall* the marine detachment was

commanded by a non-commissioned officer, Sergeant William Boynton. The seagoing infantry of the Confederacy assigned to these ships ranged the high seas, participating in battles in foreign waters as well as in the rivers and bays of the South. The marines acted as gunners, guards, and boarders, aiding in the securing of prizes on the high seas. When compelled to abandon ship, as were the crew of the *Gaines*, Lieutenant Fendall fought his way through swamps and on the beaches to Mobile where he and his amphibian detachment were in on the last stand made at that port.

AS THE cause of the Confederacy collapsed and the ruins came tumbling down, the Southern Leathernecks who had been fighting anywhere and everywhere trickled back to the old base on Drewery's Bluff. Here Lieutenant Berry came with his Devil Dogs from Charleston. They formed a part of the Naval Brigade that bolstered the wornout forces of Lee's army. From this station a last desperate attempt was launched to blow the Federal monitors out of the James. Lieutenant Crenshaw led his Leathernecks on this unsuccessful though heroic expedition. Of a party of 101, 75 had to be hospitalized as a result of privations endured as the unshod Confederate marines dragged torpedo boats through the snow. The Corps, now badly battered and sadly depleted, was still fighting as a unit in the spring of 1865.

They held out as long as Confederate leaders retained their swords.

Never heard of the Devil Dogs of Dixie? Neither did many a soldier, sailor, marine, or scholar. But there they are, buried in the pages of many a musty record, often without the distinction of a separate paragraph. Though small in number, they were not insignificant in action. If you look hard for them, although they have almost been forgotten, you will find them there, the toughest, hardest-fighting, ubiquitous outfit that ever donned the gray homespun of the Confederacy.

ILLUSTRATED BY I. B. HAZELTON

The horse screamed in terror, trying to rid himself of the clawing demon that chewed his ears.

HILL-COUNTRY 'COON

By FRED GIPSON

THE thin quavering wail of a trailing hound floated across the moonlit Texas ridges. Not until then did Stub, the bob-tailed raccoon realize how far he had prowled from the safety of the river. Lured from his midnight frogging along the Bermuda grass banks by the scent of a female raccoon, he had followed hungrily the aimless, twisting trail far up among the rocky catclaw and prickly-pear ridges. It was mating time, and Stub had not seen his mate since their last encounter with the hounds the winter before.

He paused now, undecided. Desperately, he wanted to follow that exciting trail. But he realized his danger, here away from the friendly water.

The wail of the hound rose again. Another joined it. At last, caution won over desire. Lifting his lips in a soundless growl, Stub turned and padded back down a rock-littered slope in the direction of the Llano River.

He did not appear to hurry. He stopped to investigate the upthrusts of granite boulders along the ridges, even crawling on top of one to leave his smelly sign. He poked a curious black nose into each skunk and ringtail cat den in the holes under the ledges. He marked a live oak stump and traveled

awhile along the top of an old stone fence before taking to the ground again.

But Stub had been far from the river when he started. And the trailing hounds knew their quarry too well to be delayed long by his ruses. Minute by minute, they gained. He had scarcely reached the edge of the wide mesquite flat that sloped to the river when he heard the hounds' eager clamor as they broke over the brow of the hill. Close behind them horses' hoofs clattered on the rocks, and the urgent yells of two cowboy hunters split the night.

It was now a case of run for it.

And Stub ran, bounding along in a high-rumped gallop through the tall clumps of dry broom grass. His manner of running, combined with the shortness of his black-ringed tail made him look more like an angry bobcat than the big, rangy, hill-country raccoon that he was.

DESPITE the remarkable speed Stub developed across the flat, he was no match for the hounds. Running heads up on a straight-away trail, they overtook him just as he reached the grove of tall pecans bordering the river. Only a few yards from the water, Stub saw he could never make it. Squalling with rage and fear, he whirled savagely on the lead hound, slashed at him with claws of both forefeet, then leaped for a tree trunk. The hound fell back yelping in pained surprise.

As he reached the first branch of the pecan, Stub sensed that the tree was already occupied. Above him, dark forms rocked about on swaying branches, uttering startled sounds.

"Putt! Putt! Pu-reeet!"

Suddenly the whole pecan grove exploded with a booming of heavy wings. Black shadows whipped branches, sailed out into the moonlight. Some flew upstream, some down, some plummeted across the mesquite flat, struck the ground at the base of the hill and melted into the darkness. Unwittingly, Stub had led the chase into a wild turkey roost.

The commotion was too much for the excited hounds. They ran in noisy circles, trying to locate their quarry. Some chased after the disappearing turkeys.

The cowboys, approaching at a gallop, swore at them, pleaded with them, threatened. The beam of a flashlight played among the branches, picked out the two shifting live coals that were Stub's eyes.

"Better shoot him out, Ed," advised one. "Them turkeys have flustered these fool dogs until they wouldn't know a 'coon from a game rooster. . . . Look! I'll be dogged if he ain't a stub-tailed 'un!"

Stub may not have understood the threat of the gun, but he knew instinctively to take advantage of the dogs' confusion. Silently, he dropped from a twenty-foot branch, *plopped* against the ground like a fallen sand bag, and was instantly on his feet again, headed for the river.

Only a dismounted cowboy barred him from that safety. Growling fiercely, hair standing on end, Stub tried to run around him. The yelling cowboy ran in to cut him off, kicked at him, knocked him down. Stub squalled. In a fury of pain and anger, he attacked the man.

The cowboy turned to run, stumbled over a log, fell flat. Stub landed in the middle of his back, the claws of all four feet raking. Together, they rolled, crashed through willow branches, dropped into the river with a splash.

The man sank. Stub pancaked his body on the surface and swam swiftly toward the black shadows of the rock-walled cliff across the river.

The tall elm stood against the cliff, firmly anchored by gnarled roots reaching down between a heap of boulders into the sand and gravel bar thrown up there by the river. Stub clambered out onto the bar, shook a fine spray of water from his thick gray coat and stood silently a moment, listening.

On the opposite bank, a splashing, swearing, half-drowned cowboy dragged himself out of the chill water. The other whooped with laughter. Baffled hounds ran up and down the river bank, yowling, searching for the lost raccoon.

Stub clawed his way up the tall elm, whose trunk was worn smooth with his many climbings. He entered a hole be-

tween the first forks and settled himself comfortably inside.

IT WAS early winter, but the noon sun was yet warm enough to make all things drowsy. Reluctantly, Stub awakened to the sound of bawling range cattle moving up from the river canyon. Or maybe it was the hoarse croaking of the bullfrogs and the shrill piping of the little brown frogs. Such sounds were not natural along the river at this time of day.

Stub roused himself, yawned, reached his forefeet to the rim of his hole and hung his mask-like face out, his chin resting on his feet. At once, he sensed an electrified tension in the air, a portentous muffled rumbling more felt than heard. Upstream, jagged streaks of lightning flared across the face of a black cloud. In the deep pool downstream, trout fed upon restless insects, smacking their tails against the surface of the water. There, too, beavers worked feverishly at an embankment of logs, mud, and twigs. A deer came down to drink at the opposite bank, stood, head uplifted, for a moment at the water's edge, sniffed, and suddenly wheeled and disappeared into the brush. Even the gray little cliff wrens dwelling in the cracks along the face of the cliffs beside Stub's elm tree were uneasy. They twittered and hopped about, uncertain in their actions.

The uneasiness of the other creatures failed to disturb Stub, however. He knew what was coming. The Llano was about to flood again. It was the wrong time of the year for floods, but the perverseness of Texas weather is legendary. Somewhere in the broken canyon country upriver heavy rains were falling. By night, the flood that sometimes came in a thundering wall of water would be surging down upon them. Stub had experienced too many floods in his ten years of life to be concerned about this one.

High up in his elm-tree hollow, he felt secure. Sometimes the heaviest floods had swayed the old elm a little, but always its roots had held tight in the rock crevices. Here, in this very same hollow, he had been born. Here, with his now lost mate, he had raised other baby raccoons, led the cubs down the trunk, helped teach them their first lessons in swimming and frog catching. Here, where the friendly water washed a gap in the trail scent every wild thing leaves behind, the hounds could not follow. Here was home.

Stub withdrew into his hole to drowse again. The flood waters would recede in a day or two, he knew; then the fishing would be good in the potholes in the river's flood bed. The potholes served as traps for minnows and perch, sometimes even for channel cat and trout when the waters lowered rapidly.

THE flood rolled down, a devastating thing. A smelly, brown-water monster that carried with it a thundering barrage of great, tumbling boulders. Century-old pecans and elms bowed before the incalculable weight of the water, snapped like kindling wood when the boulders struck. The broken trees rolled and whirled about, tangled with others, formed a floating mass of debris that moved down the river, carrying everything before it, stripping the canyon of its timber.

Stub's elm and Stub went down with the flood.

The creaking, groaning mass of jammed timbers struck the old elm, whipping it down before Stub realized what was happening. The startled raccoon only knew that his home tree was suddenly submerged, and was straining and tearing and shivering to its last fiber. Then the roots tore loose. The tree was forced deeper. The mass of debris swept over it, spun it round and round on the river bottom.

Thrown half out of the entrance to his hollow, the strangling Stub clung desperately to the bark, unable to do more. So nearly drowned was he when the heavy tree finally rose to the surface, so blinding was the rain that followed the flood, that Stub hardly realized he was still alive and gasping for air.

The tree rolled again, and Stub started up, climbing and swimming from one

branch to another as they broke the surface. Unexcited, and with full strength, Stub might have swum out of the flood to safety. Taken so by surprise, he barely was able to keep his head above the water.

Gradually the current pulled the top of the tree downstream, checking the rolling motion. Desperately, Stub clung to a broken branch that protruded above the water. His lungs sobbed and shuddered like choked bellows. The rain beat down unmercifully upon him.

As the elm drifted downstream just behind the main crest of the flood, conflicting currents jerked it this way and that, rammed it against rock embankments, snapping off more branches, whirled it, rolled it over and over. Still, the half-drowned raccoon clung doggedly to his one chance for life—the tree.

Once the tree drove into a cliff wall with such stunning force that Stub was thrown loose. For a few moments he fought frantically in a white smothering froth of water that sucked him under. At last he was shot spinning to the surface where he found himself back among the branches of the very tree he had lost. Again the tree tangled with others, branches interlocking, snapping, pressing tighter together. The springy limbs whipped Stub brutally, caught him up, and squeezed him nearly lifeless.

Two hours and some twenty miles downstream a battered, weakened raccoon still struggled for his life, riding his flood-tossed tree. Suddenly the trunk, now in the lead, shot under a log jam. The top sprang skyward, slammed against a cliff.

Stub, clinging to a branch away from the cliff wall, did not receive the full force of the blow; but he was knocked senseless. His little hand-like feet loosed their grips. He dropped to a ledge a few feet above the thundering water.

SOME hours later Stub stirred to life. He was cold, wet, half-crazed from the stunning blow. One shoulder pained him badly. He limped as he padded wearily the length of the ledge, found a break in the cliff wall and dragged himself up a steep passageway to the top. The rain had ceased, but the hills still resounded to the pounding of the flood.

Action cleared his brain and warmed his body. Hunger assailed him. Up here along the ridgetop was no place to feed. Down below, the river was carrying everything before it. Stub wandered back from the river, prowled down to a creek which stood full with the trashy, heaving backwash of the flood.

He followed the water's edge, his keen nose investigating mingled odors of the night. The water smelled strongly of catfish, but none had washed ashore here. Even the frogs were gone.

He discovered the body of a drowned javelina pig. Stub was not normally a carrion eater, and the odor of the pig was strong; nevertheless, he reached and dragged the animal out of the water.

Only to have a snarling bobcat spring out of the darkness and rob him of his prize before he could tear through the tough hide.

Ordinarily, Stub would have contested this rank theft, in spite of the fact that he seldom escaped from such combats with anything but a lacerated body. His enemy the bobcat was much more powerful than he. Tonight, however, the raccoon was too battered and weary to fight over a drowned javelina pig. He moved on.

Daybreak found him feeding upon shinoak acorn mast far back up in the brush-choked draws that drained the limestone ridges. The acorns were sour, but plentiful and fattening. Stub dug them out of the soggy leaf beds. Some of the beds had already been worked over by wild turkeys. The javelinas were rooting them apart, too, and the range hogs. Even the deer were shouldering into the tangled thickets for scattered acorns.

Stub slept through the day curled up under the leafy roofing of a fallen blackjack. He fed upon acorns the next night, slept through the following day under a limestone ledge.

Back to normal now, his limp virtu-

BACK OUR FIGHTING MEN . . . BUY WAR BONDS!

ally gone, his belly comfortably full, a great unrest seized the raccoon. Here food was plentiful, a place of abode easily found; but it was strange country. The wash and murmur of the river was not with him. There were no tasty frogs to stalk, no silver-bellied minnows to be grabbed out of the shallows, no trapped fish to be caught out of the potholes. Here there was no water to break his trail when the hounds ran him. But mainly, here there was no elm tree, with its comfortable hollow. This was not home.

That night Stub fed erratically, moving upstream, quartering the river, guided by that homing instinct natural to all wild things. Perhaps he expected to find his elm tree still standing beside the cliff. More likely, he merely wanted to be back at his old feeding grounds, where he knew every bush, rock, tree, and trail.

Toward midnight, however, he was traveling even more rapidly back downstream again, lured by the exciting trail scent of a roaming female raccoon. The animal was not far ahead. Stub whined with eagerness as he followed.

A plaintive whimper across a rocky arroyo answered him. Stub plunged down across the arroyo and up the other side. She was waiting for him in a patch of moonlight between two huge live oaks. He halted his rush a few yards away from her and approached warily. She was a yearling female, hardly more than an overgrown cub. But her fur, lighter in color than Stub's, was thick and fine. Her ringed tail was unusually long for one so young.

This was her first mating. The moment she touched black noses with Stub, she launched herself at him with all the squalling fury of an insulted woman. Stub, expecting just this, fell back out of the way, pleading absolute innocence in injured whimperings. She turned to go. Stub followed briskly, only to be turned upon with another attack of mock furiousness.

THUS engrossed in the oldest and most thrilling of all games, the two raccoons failed to take notice of the hounds on their trail until the eager clamor of the dogs' voices broke over the ridge. The frustrated lovers stood transfixed for a moment. Then the startled young raccoon dashed for one of the live oaks.

This time, it was Stub who attacked. And there was no mockery in the cuff he landed against her jaw, turning her toward the river. Frightened, she ran. Angry, fur standing on end, Stub followed, herding his new-found mate along, overtaking and cuffing her severely whenever she ran in any direction but that of the river. Long ago, Stub had learned to use a tree only as a last resort when hounds and men were after him. Only in water was there any real safety.

Down the moonlit arroyo the two fled. The draw deepened, widened near the river. A clean cowpath led down the center of it, winding through the brush. The raccoons followed the path. Stub lost no time attempting to mislead the hounds. He centered all his attention on hurrying his mate to the water.

The hills echoed with the deep-toned baying of the oncoming pack and the encouraging shouts of riders behind them. Stub snarled and drove his mate harder, faster.

Unhampered by a frightened young raccoon, the rangy Stub could easily have outrun the dogs to the water. As it was, dogs and quarry piled into the water at the same time—a howling, squalling, slashing tangle that dismayed the two cowboys who pulled up their blowing horses on the bank a moment later.

Flashlight beams spotted the whirling battle in the water. Here Stub was in his element, a far better swimmer than the hounds. He squalled. He bit. He climbed atop the heads of his enemies and rode them under. In his wrath, he did not wait to be attacked, but sought out his enemies and tore into them.

Now that she was in the water the young raccoon, herself, was more than a match for any hound. She, too, climbed upon a dog's head and rode him under, holding him there until he was almost drowned.

The riders on the bank alternated between calling the dogs out of the water and swearing at them for not coming.

Finally, one cowboy headed his horse down the steep bank.

"Got to get them fool hounds out, Ed," he shouted excitedly. "Them two 'coons'll drown every one of them!"

Stub was not aware of this new enemy until the heavy blow of a quirt butt knocked him from the head of a struggling hound. He rolled free, bobbed up and attached himself to the thing nearest him—the horse's head.

The horse screamed in terror and reared, shaking and pawing at his head, trying to rid himself of the clawing, biting demon that squalled and chewed his ears. For an instant, the horse balanced there in the moonlight, then lunged backward. The wild yell of the frightened cowboy was smothered by the water that enveloped him, horse, and raccoon.

Stub released his hold as the water surged over him. He bobbed to the surface and allowed himself to drift with the current. Behind him the snorting horse floundered to his feet. The cowboy rose to the surface, too, and clutched at the floating saddle skirts. The hounds were swimming for the bank. The little female raccoon had disappeared.

Stub found her where a log jam had formed against a cliff at the end of the pool. A dead hound rose to the surface at her feet, then went under again. The two raccoons crouched side by side, and licked their wounds.

Upstream, at the mouth of the canyon, one cowboy hunter pulled another out of the river.

"Seems like every time we jump a 'coon, Buck, you wind up in the river with it," he chided.

The bedraggled Buck was swearing steadily.

"And it's the same 'coon ever' time," he raged. "When my horse rar'd up, I skylighted that 'coon sitting on top his head. That rascal didn't have any more tail than I've got. Same one we jumped up the river the other night before the flood. . . . Get a fire started!"

Undisturbed by the voices upstream, Stub turned and prowled across the tangled jam to where a tall log stood upright, its stubby broken branches jammed securely into the crevices of the cliff. There was something familiar about that log, the way it stood up against the rock wall. Curious, Stub climbed it. There was something even more familiar about the hollow between the first forks. He reached in and dragged out a bit of trash, entered.

Stub was home again.

ILLUSTRATED BY LYNN BOGUE HUNT

TO THE LAST MAN

By WILLIAM E. BARRETT

SYNOPSIS

THE year is 1816; the place South America—where CRAIG ARCHER, one-time Captain of Cavalry in the Army of the United States, has gone to answer the ringing challenge of *Freedom for Chile!* At the behest of MIGUEL CARRERA, who claims leadership of the Chilean patriots, Archer—with his aide, MAJOR BLACKWELL—has recruited a company of 150 hardened American fighting men. Sailing from the Port of Baltimore, they finally reach Buenos Aires, capital of a republic which has itself only recently thrown off the yoke of the Spanish overlord. Here they are to be equipped.

But now, Archer learns to his dismay the dubious nature of the Chileno's position. Since the Battle of Rancagua, which had resulted in disaster for the cause of Chilean independence, Carrera's leadership has been repudiated by BERNARDO O'HIGGINS, half-Irish half-Chilean patriot, who has placed in

The Indians had drawn first blood. But let them look out! He had brought these men a long way to die.

ILLUSTRATED BY HAMILTON GREENE

command of the exiled Chilean Army an Argentine, JOSÉ FRANCISCO DE SAN MARTIN. Carrera has come to Buenos Aires to confer with men of influence there, hoping to win them to his banner—and Archer and his men are only pawns in Carrera's game of power politics.

Archer, unskilled in intrigue, reaches for his lucky piece—a gold medal engraved with the grinning figure of a jester—reads the inscription, *I have two sides, Power has only one*, and decides to await the turn of events.

Strolling across the Plaza Victoria, on his first evening in the Argentine city, Archer returns the provocative glance of a lovely señorita, when suddenly a glove lashes him across the mouth. He whirls to stare into the angry eyes of a little man in the dazzling uniform of the Black

Hussars of the Republic of Chile. The man identifies himself as COLONEL MANUEL RODRIGUEZ ARDOIZA and challenges Archer to a duel. Archer accepts.

Next morning, at the duelling place, Archer finds a tall Englishman awaiting him, COLONEL HERBERT DANNING, who offers his services as second. The American indignantly refuses, reminding Danning that their nations were but lately at war. But the Englishman good-naturedly insists. In the ensuing duel, Archer gets the Chilean colonel at his mercy, then generously inflicts only a scratch upon him to end the affair.

Gratified, Rodriguez invites Archer to his home for breakfast, where he meets the lady for whose honor the Chileno had fought—his sister, YSABEL. Over breakfast, Rodriguez explains his role in the revolution—rousing the Indians against the Spanish oppressors, and raising from their ranks an army of freedom. Then a message arrives for Rodriguez, informing him of Archer's connection with Carrera, whom he despises as the man whose conduct caused the patriots' downfall at Rancagua. No longer friendly, Rodriguez orders Archer to leave.

Later Carrera accuses the American of conspiring with Rodriguez, which Archer angrily denies. Carrera then orders him to assemble his men at a nearby estancia. In company with Carrera's lieutenant, JUAN GARCIA, Archer sets out for the waterfront to round up his mercenaries, carousing there after their long voyage.

PART TWO

IT WAS a different city, this Buenos Aires, in the daylight, but there was little of beauty in it. The houses were squat, low structures, built for the most part of adobe clay bricks, the streets were narrow and, with few exceptions, unpaved. There was little more than room for two horsemen to pass and when two carriages met, they each pulled over and ran their wheels on the board sidewalks, reckless of the lives of the pedestrians who sought hasty cover in doorways. Over all there hung the heavy smell of refuse dumped in streets and yards and alleys, the heavier smell of packed humanity in a city without sewers. Yet, this was Buenos Aires, "City of Good Airs."

The waterfront was a collection of shacks at the edge of mud-flats that led to the broad rolling brown tide of La Plata. Archer sat his horse and sent the lieutenant into the cantinas.

"I want every American, asleep or awake, to report to me immediately," he said.

In a few minutes, red-eyed, bedraggled-looking men started tumbling out. There were eleven of them in the first two cantinas who had been permitted to sleep on the floors of back rooms. As Archer anticipated, they were chastened and amenable to discipline because they were not only broke, but most of them had pledged personal belongings for additional pleasures on the night before. Archer extracted silver coins from a pouch at his belt, paid their debts and sent the men to round up others.

In an hour the Americans were assembled and Blackwell, Archer's second, had them divided into small groups under the three lieutenants. There was no captain in the group because Archer had wanted a vacant post to which the lieutenants might aspire. The sergeants, knowing that a lieutenancy would be open when a captain was appointed, were also alert. The vacancy was a fine morale-builder.

Surprisingly enough no man had received a knife in the ribs during the night, although there were many claims of robbery. Archer was well satisfied and once the troop had been started on the right road beyond the dirty little Riachuelo River, he left command to Blackwell and rode ahead with Juan Garcia.

The camp at the estancia astonished him. Riding through a grove of trees, he came upon a white rambling house of colonial design surrounded by acres of flat land over which a veritable army spread. Here were wagons, horses, mules and men; roaring fires and open kitchens, bales of supplies and streets of tents. Men in dark blue uniforms, faced with red, moved among half naked Indians and cotton clad *cholos*, common

laborers, who sweated over a confusion of packing and unpacking.

Miguel Carrera, resplendent on a great black horse that was worthy of a Conquistador, rode out to meet Archer and his lieutenant. He was wearing a light blue cavalry jacket, white breeches and gleaming boots, a cavalry saber by his side and the outfit topped by a tricorn hat of French inspiration. He waved his hand.

"What think you?" he said.

Archer answered honestly. "I am impressed."

"It is our outfit, our supply train, our escort of two hundred Chileno cavalry."

"Two hundred?"

"Ah, yes." Carrera smiled and there was a fleeting triumph in his eyes. "Is a general to be outnumbered by the men under his colonel's command?"

Archer nodded. "I will take the lesser number," he said.

His meaning was plain. Sight unseen, he was conceding numerical supremacy to the Chilenos and backing his own Americans. Carrera interpreted correctly but seemed only amused.

"Between good soldiers, rivalry is not vicious," he said.

THERE was a room assigned to Archer and he found his uniforms there. He had been supplied with three, as well as changes of boots. He fingered the material, comparable in every way to that used in the uniforms of United States officers. He had selected one uniform himself in Baltimore but had not known that Carrera had ordered more. This expedition became more amazing each hour—richer on the surface than the expeditions of many well-established governments, yet hunted and secret and without standing. He knew how his men would be equipped because he had helped in the purchasing. The weapons, saddles and many items of personal equipment had been bought from dealers in battlefield loot of the War of 1812, but it was good stuff.

"The Spanish viceroys, I wager, do not equip their men better!"

Archer had selected a uniform with a light-weight jacket of blue and breeches of dark gray striped with red. He stiffened suddenly with the uniform in his hands as his own thought echoed, then re-echoed, in his brain.

"The Spanish viceroys do not equip their men better!"

He laid the uniform aside and sat down. The Spanish viceroys! Suppose this equipment *did* come from them! Suppose, somewhere along the line, he and his men were destined to be used against men who esteemed them as allies! He had no assurance that such was not the plan. It would explain so much. Carrera's failure in a critical battle, as charged by Rodriguez, the prodigal expenditure, the suspicions of other Latinos, the conspiratory attitude of Carrera!

Archer reached into his pocket and withdrew the Jester's medal. Without looking at it, he spun it and the Jester's face came upward, with the inscription *I have two sides, Power has only one.*

It was an answer of sorts, an answer such as a man might give. Archer stared at the grinning face on the medal. A jester had two sides to him and a jester was a fool; a man of power troubled about one side only, his own. For the first time since he had had the medal, it made sense. He put it away thoughtfully.

What mattered it about these Chilenos, these Portenos, all of these schemers for power. Deep down they were probably of the same motive, the same morals, as the Spaniards. Why pick sides in a war? Serve where you are, seek power, do not look at the other side of the medal, never doubt. That was good sane philosophy for a soldier. Without such a philosophy, Cortez and Pizarro and all those swaggering Conquistadors would have been stopped at the sea. They left it to fools to waver and they served Power.

It was a thought to set unsoldierly doubts at rest and he used it. A nagging thought remained in the back of his mind but he refused to listen to it. With the new uniform on, he strode outside and it was good to hear again the jingle of spurs when he walked.

Blackwell had come in with the troops. The march had sweated the alcohol out

of them and they were in time for the noon meal which they needed. After that there was siesta when they could sleep for two hours.

The heat blanketed down and it was a stage curtain that ended an act. Work ceased, not a man stirred. The shade absorbed human bodies and the hush of siesta was a solemn thing like the moment of benediction in a church. Dogs and domestic animals sought rest, as men did, and only a few buzzing insects proclaimed continuing existence.

THE awakening to a working world was like the calling of the dead on the Day of Judgment. There was no bugle, no drum, no audible summons: men knew and men arose, shaking the stain of the earth from their garments. The sun sank behind the trees and the camp stirred, quickened, then became a buzzing hive once more.

Archer went with Garcia, who had been appointed liaison officer, to inspect the horses of his troop.

Archer went with Garcia, who had been appointed liaison officer, to inspect the horses of his troop. They were tough-mouthed, wiry plains ponies, unlike his own finer bred charger, but fit mounts for a hard fighting cavalry unit that was stronger on battle manners than on parade mount.

One Chilean unit was already saddled and maneuvering quickly into line. Archer looked them over with a trained and critical eye.

They were small-boned, wiry men with a look of cat-like strength about them. Their uniforms were dark blue, like Garcia's, with facings of red, and red stripes in the breeches. The animals were sleek, well-rubbed mules and the men sat them with pride and with a sureness in the saddle that bespoke training as well as aptitude. This was no raw militia outfit.

"Mules?" he said.

"Si, señor. Mules. The mule is a noble animal and has no superior in the mountains."

Archer nodded. His own men had horses and that was tactful of Carrera who sensed that Americans would resent being mounted upon mules. Archer rode on and found his own men attired in jackets of brighter blue than the Chilenos, breeches of gray with the inevitable red stripe. They were in a cheerful mood and cursing fluently as they saddled their touchy mounts. Cheerfulness and fluent cursing usually go together in a cavalry troop.

A group of some twenty mounted men had gathered around the American section of the camp; rough, broad-faced men in ponchos and *chiripas,* clutching their stirrups with naked toes and jesting among themselves as they watched the Americans saddle.

Archer frowned.

"Who are these fellows, Lieutenant?" he asked Garcia.

"Gauchos, señor. Riders of the pampas."

"Do they belong to our army?"

"No, señor, they belong to nobody," replied Garcia.

"Then we ought to run them along."

"Drive off the gaucho, señor?" There was a horrified amazement in Garcia's voice. "*Gracias a Dios!* As well slap a hornet. A gaucho is not a man, he is a swarm. He is everywhere and one gaucho fights for another. To insult one is very bad luck, señor."

"It is a pretty poor army that is afraid of a few cowboys."

"All armies are afraid of them, señor, believe me. If they could be hired they would be invincible, but they will fight only for what interests them and they are not interested in causes."

Archer looked at the gauchos with renewed interest. Here was still another weight that could tip the crazy scales of this divided and uncertain world. He saw men whose hair grew long, bound back by colored silk handkerchiefs. They sat their magnificent, castle-maned horses carelessly and they wore long silver-hilted knives in their belts. Those, except for a coiled rope, seemed to be their only weapon. Archer commented on this and Garcia rolled his eyes.

"The rope, señor, is *la bola perdida.* It is a stone fixed to a plaited thong. They whirl this around their heads and they can bring down an animal or—*Maria Santissima!*—a man, at seventy yards."

"Seventy yards!"

"Si, señor. I have seen it with my eyes."

"I would have to see it with mine. But what are they doing here?"

"Your men are foreigners. They want to laugh at how they ride."

"Oh!" Archer laughed himself and turned his horse aside. He had recruited his men mainly from the frontier along the Missouri—leather-hard plainsmen who topped off their own ponies and tough cavalrymen who had gone into the Indians' own wilderness and driven the Indians out of it. The gaucho would have to be very good indeed if he found anything at which to laugh in their horsemanship—and he would have to be very nimble in dodging after he laughed if his laughter were insulting.

It was a matter best left to the men without the embarrassment of having a commanding officer present. Archer rode back to the ranch house and Carrera was waiting. The Chileno smiled.

"You found things satisfactory?"

"Perfectly. So far."

"Good. I present you to my brother, to whom we owe this excellent preparation, made while we were still at sea."

A SHORT, heavily muscled, broad-shouldered man rose from a table where he had been busily writing. Archer's first thought was that it was a doubling of misfortune that there should be two Carreras, but Hernando Carrera did not look like Miguel. Besides being shorter and broader, he was different in features. His cheek-bones were high and

his eyes masked themselves behind puffy mounds of flesh that pushed the lower lids upward. A white knife scar ran down the man's left cheek from the edge of his hair to his jawline.

"The camp, it is well fitted in your eyes, Colonel?" he said.

"Very well fitted. I did not expect such an elaborate outfit."

"That is good. It reassures you. Never seek your support where the dogs are thin, *amigo*."

"There is truth in that."

Archer seated himself at the table. This Hernando was affable but there was the scent of Carrera about him, the air of a plotter. He turned a page and read some figures on the number of horses and mules, the food animals that would be taken on the expedition and the supplies of dry food. As he spoke he gestured and the light caught the gleam of a gold medal on a thong about his wrist. At a pause in the conversation, Archer indicated it.

"That medal, Don Hernando," he said. "It cannot be what I think. May I see it?"

Hernando Carrera drew himself straight and for a moment, his eyes were hard. These Latinos, Archer had noticed, were as proud as Lucifer about everything that touched and concerned them personally. It was easy to offend even one who was extending cordial hospitality. He reached into his pocket and laid his own medal on the table top.

"Unless it is like that one, I withdraw my interest," he said.

Don Hernando stared at the medal, then loosened his own. "It is different," he said, "and yet the same."

Archer picked up the second medal. Like his, it had the grinning Jester engraved upon it. The inscription, however, was different. It read, *I have but one face. Beware of him with two.*

Archer turned it over in his hand. On the reverse side, within the shield was the legend, *Gold is never owned. It belongs only to its possessor.* Around the edge was an inscription in script—*Beware of him who has read only one book.*

The eyes of Archer and Don Hernando met across the table. "I found mine on the skeleton of a Frenchman who died on the Hudson Palisades," Archer said.

"Mine came from a body still warm. A Frenchman who served the Spaniards at Rancagua."

Archer took his own medal and returned that of Hernando Carrera. "The medals have no good record as lucky pieces," he said.

Don Hernando shrugged. "A medal may not like the man who carries it and may seek, therefore, another owner."

"Possibly!"

Archer was thinking that there was a strange fate in this—that he should be linked to this man, half a world away from his own place of origin, by such a trifle as a medal of mockery; and that that man should be a Carrera. Don Hernando was looking at him with eyes that hid behind trenches of flesh.

"I, like you, am but a colonel in the army of this magnificent general, my brother," he said, "but only kings have jesters and perhaps it is written that the colonels shall be kings."

There was an undertone in his speech. Don Miguel, the magnificent general, laughed a trifle nervously. "Chile has had enough of kings," he said, "and there are honors enough for all brave men in redeeming it."

Archer broke the sudden tension. "For my part," he said, "I dislike mysteries. I have not been told where we go, how far nor our purpose."

Don Hernando looked at his brother. Miguel smiled, a general once more. "We go to offer our army, as O'Higgins offered his, to General San Martin," he said, "and we must journey a thousand miles to do so."

"A thousand miles!"

"All of that. Across such an ocean as you have not seen, my friend—an ocean of waving grass—the pampas. We start tomorrow, God willing, because San Martin can be trusted but there are others who may not be. He will hear us with dignity where others would ambush us on the way. There are couriers who would ride a thousand miles to stop us at five hundred."

Archer tensed. "The name of this place where San Martin is?" he said hoarsely.

The others looked at him in surprise.

"He is at Mendoza," replied Miguel.

Archer rose in his place. "Mendoza! Then, gentlemen, the courier has already started. A cursed Englishman who rode before breakfast."

His face was a fighting mask as he recalled the haste of Danning to leave the duelling grounds, the note that had come back to Rodriguez and closed the door of Casa Rodriguez to him.

"An Englishman!"

The brothers Carrera leaned forward. Archer was standing with his legs spread wide. "An Englishman named Danning," he said, "and a Colonel of Chile."

The two brothers exchanged glances and it was Hernando who spoke. "I know him not," he said, "but if he is a Colonel of Chile, then he is a creature of O'Higgins and that is our greatest danger."

Archer drew a deep breath. "I do not know O'Higgins," he said, "but I know Danning. He owes me an accounting."

Miguel Carrera clapped his hands. "We will have wine," he said, "and a toast. That all of our enemies may lodge in the one camp."

Don Hernando looked at the medal of the jester that hung on his left wrist. "To drink a toast is good," he said, "but to ride early on the morrow is better."

Archer said nothing but he waited for the wine. For the first time since his feet touched the soil of South America he had a sense of being united in a cause against a common enemy. On the medal in his pocket a legend ran: *Causes survive their champions*, but he was not thinking of medals. He was thinking of Ysabel Rodriguez and an introduction that had been cancelled.

CHAPTER V

A PAIR OF EPAULETS

THE pampa spread wide and far, so that no man might guess its extent nor limit its majesty by dimension. It was a sea of grass, always in whispering motion under a gentle wind that never ceased for a moment by day or night. Riders disappeared from sight in it as ships disappear at sea; the horse vanishing first, then the man, last of all the hat that he wore. Guides found the ancient trails through the tall, heavy-stalked grasses, but when men or caravan had passed, the trails closed again and only an initiate might find them.

Leagues apart were the cleared spaces, like islands in the grassy sea: a *pulperia* or store, set in the middle, surrounded by the *rancheria*, miserable groups of huts in which, more often than not,

"They are gauchos, señor, riders of the Pampas."

women dwelt. Occasionally, too, in a larger clearing there was a mission with Indians working a few acres of ground that had been won from the enveloping grass, solemn friars in brown habits superintending their work. There were, too, the government post-stations and an occasional *estancia* but for the most part there was silence, vastness, cattle and horses roaming free; ostriches, hares and coyotes that howled through the nights.

Day after day, Carrera's caravan traversed this wilderness and tense expectancy mounted with the days. "One should always expect the worst from an enemy," said the Chilenos and they slept on their weapons. Craig Archer kept his own camp, posted his own sentries at night, and used the trip to weld his force into a compact military unit—but danger merely stalked them, it did not strike.

Blackwell, Archer's second-in-command, was sulky with Archer, harsh with the men under him. He was a moody man at best but his actual experience in the field exceeded Archer's and he was a good man for a campaign. Archer did not like him personally, but that made no particular difference. Carrera's expedition was no social engagement so Archer ignored the sulkiness and waited for the cause to reveal itself. Things came to a head on the seventh night.

Juan Garcia, the liaison man between Archer's troop and Carrera's came into Archer's tent. He had some routine supply matters to discuss. The leading party of one hundred Chilenos under Miguel Carrera himself had lost the contents of a wagon when it overturned in crossing a creek. It was necessary to transfer some supplies from Archer's troop and then arrange to replace them from the slower moving pack train under Hernando Carrera which brought up the rear under the guard of the remaining hundred Chilenos. The details were swiftly arranged and Archer leaned back.

"You are an experienced soldier, Lieutenant," he said. "Where did you get your experience?"

"In Chile, señor. I fought at San Fernando, where we scored a glorious victory and"—his voice was suddenly sad—"at Rancagua where we were unfortunate."

"I knew you were a veteran." Archer's eyes asked the question that it would be untactful for his lips to ask.

Garcia spread his hands. "I, too, was unfortunate. Had I served under one commander, perhaps I would have won promotion. I served under two."

"You served both sides?"

"No, señor. Always I served Chile. At San Fernando, it was the command of Colonel Rodiguez. At Rancaqua I had the privilege of serving our own great commander, General José Miguel Carrera."

The words were delivered with a flourish and Archer, who knew enough about the Latinos to recognize political flattery, dismissed the compliment to Carrera for what it was. The mention of Rodriguez stirred him. There were mysterious depths here.

"So you left the army of Rodriguez."

"Si, señor." Garcia hesitated, his voice a little regretful when he spoke. "Nobody could serve long under Colonel Rodriguez. He finds an army when he needs it. He finds it anywhere. Men follow him and fight for him. When there is no fighting to be done, he deserts these men. And the señorita?"

"What about the señorita?"

"Most beautiful, my colonel. But men do not like it that she wears an officer's uniform and rides in battle. It humiliates them. . . ."

"The Señorita Rodriguez does that?"

"Ah, yes. Where Colonel Rodriguez goes, there goes Señorita Ysabel. A great lady in the cities, with the clothes of a lady; a soldier in the field with the uniform of a soldier."

Lieutenant Garcia drew a deep breath. "I should not, perhaps, be talking to you, señor, but it is said in the villages of Chile where men read what is written in the heavens and not in books, that Señorita Ysabel is the luck of Rodriguez, who is a great man. If she should lose her heart to a man, they say, then swiftly the colonel—who takes great risks—will die."

The tent flap lifted and Garcia turned as swiftly as a cat. Miguel Carrera stepped into the tent and Garcia paled.

Carrera did not even look at him. He was in full uniform and there was a sinister splendor about him. His dark eyes fixed upon Archer's face. "I had hoped to find you alone," he said.

It was one of those delicately balanced moments when a word can swing events into any one of several channels. Archer resented the manner of Carrera's coming to his tent. He wondered how much of the conversation the man had heard and was glad that the man had tact enough not to attempt to dismiss Garcia. Although one of Carrera's officers, the man had been assigned to Archer's command. Archer met Carrera's eyes and he, too, ignored the unhappy Garcia.

"If you had announced your visit, General," he said, "I could have arranged to receive you properly."

Carrera seated himself on the tent stool which Garcia had vacated. "My visit is quite informal," he said. "A mere friendly call."

"Ah!" Archer looked toward Garcia. "Will you ask Major Blackwell to hold himself in readiness, Lieutenant. I wish to see him when the general and I have had our visit."

Garcia saluted and Carrera's voice cut in swiftly. "Major Blackwell was kind enough to escort me to your tent," he said. "He awaits me."

Garcia hesitated, uncertain about his order.

Archer's voice was quietly firm. "My order stands, Lieutenant." Garcia went out. "And now, General?"

CARRERA'S eyes were smoldering pools. He was angry and trying to cloak the anger under the outward forms of ceremony.

"You have a fatal love of intrigue, Colonel," he said. "The soldier below the rank of general who dabbles in politics shortens his career."

"You have explained that to your brother?"

Carrera flushed. "My brother's career and mine are politically linked," he said.

"That is an interesting remark. I had the idea that my career was linked also to yours."

"You do not act as though it were."

"Suppose that you explain yourself."

"It was that purpose which brought me here. You found mysterious business of your own in Buenos Aires, Colonel. Your secrecy shook my faith in you. Your refusal to confide in me was a bruise upon our friendship. You announced a blood feud against a Colonel Danning, whom I did not know, and that disturbed me."

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"So?"

"Today I have learned the identity of Colonel Danning and, as your commander, it is my duty to warn you that you must have no quarrel with him."

Archer thrust his chin forward. "My business with Colonel Danning is my own."

"You think so. I tell you that your business, which you consider personal, may cost us all for which we strive. I cannot have it."

"No? Well, suppose you grant me some of the frankness that you seem to prize so highly."

"I am ever frank. Colonel Danning is on the staff of General San Martin. You chose your friends badly in Buenos Aires if you have a quarrel with him."

"I heard no sentiments of affection for San Martin from you. Are we not expecting an attack before we reach Mendoza?"

Carrera clenched and unclenched his hands, watching them as he did so. His lips twisted savagely. "I have only respect for General San Martin," he said. "I would be honored to serve under him."

He seemed to crouch on the stool and then his eyes, murderously savage, raised to Archer's.

"As for O'Higgins! He is my countryman. I know more of him, Colonel Archer, than you will learn in the back alleys of Buenos Aires or from the babbling of junior officers."

Archer rose slowly to his feet. "Good-night, General Carrera," he said.

Carrera looked startled and his anger gave way slowly to astonishment. "But I—"

"I said good-night."

"You can't. I—"

"You haven't rank enough and you aren't man enough to insult me in my own tent. Get out of here!"

Carrera stood up. His face went white. "I was wrong," he said, "in speaking hastily. You stirred my anger. No offense was meant."

"The apology is accepted. The affair with Danning is still my own."

The bluster was out of Carrera. Archer sat down and he did. "I ask you, then, to postpone a reckoning," he said, "until we have made arrangements with General San Martin. He is a stern man, a religious man. We must ally ourselves to him or we are lost."

"And after we are allied to him?"

"Once accepted into his army, your business with another officer is your own. Until then you endanger us all by any rash action."

It was Archer's turn to be thoughtful. There was force and logic in what Carrera said and Archer was a soldier by training and temperament. The command is always more important than the man. Several times it would have been easy for him to clear up the poison in Carrera's mind about his personal business in Buenos Aires. He could have said: "I had a duel with Rodriguez and Danning was my second." That was all there was to it. But Carrera's attitude had never made the easy way possible. He had created an issue and there would be a loss of face now in explanations. Moreover, Carrera's mind would inevitably plot to use that duel to his own advantage in some way. He was not a straight dealer.

If Danning was on San Martin's staff, however, he could not be singled out without disturbing delicate matters and no soldier has the right to settle his own affairs at the expense of grand strategy. Archer raised his eyes to Carrera's.

"I will not seek Danning," he said, "until you have seen San Martin."

"Excellent." Carrera smiled and stood up. "I have your word then?"

"You have my word. A few minutes ago I had your apology. It included a remark about junior officers. Lieutenant Garcia is a loyal soldier of yours and of mine. I esteem him highly. I would resent anything unfortunate that happened to him."

Carrera's white teeth flashed. "I esteem him as you do. Did I not, he would not have been so trusted. I trust him further. Tomorrow he carries my personal letter to General San Martin, announcing our intention of visiting him as loyal followers and soldiers of Chile."

"I like Garcia where he is."

"As you will. But it is an honor that any officer in my command would cherish."

"Honor him, then, but let us keep our relationship clean, General. If you bring politics to my tent, I will consider it the same thing as if you had brought a snake."

Carrera laughed. "We will be soldiers and comrades," he said, "under God and for Chile."

HE WENT out then and he left Archer with the feeling that his friendship was likely to prove as dangerous as his enmity. The man changed his moods too swiftly. He could become in a moment whatever was best suited to his own advantage. There was a stir outside the tent and Major Andrew Blackwell entered. His expression was sullen and he brought the odor of native whiskey with him. Archer looked at him sternly.

"You brought a visitor to my tent," he said, "without announcing him in advance."

"He is the general. I just escorted him."

"This is my tent, my command. He was a visitor."

"Well, he wanted to come. He's the one that pays us. Why should I cross him because of some fool point of military etiquette?"

Blackwell was militantly defiant. Archer's eyes narrowed ominously. "So that is how you look at it," he said.

"That's how I look at it and that isn't all." Blackwell seated himself without waiting for permission in the chair that Carrera had vacated. "There's money in this deal, gold and lots of it. This talk about the freedom of Chile is dust in the eyes of any fool that wants to believe it. I'm no fool."

"No?"

"No. I'd be a fool if I was satisfied to second you in command and take the big risks for wages, while you and the Carreras divided the loot. I am not that kind of a fool, Archer. I want my share."

"You're drunk, so I am taking a lot from you."

"Drunk or sober, I say what I believe."

"You signed a generous contract. You were satisfied with it when you signed it."

"I didn't know what I know now."

"What do you know now?"

"I know that there is gold, riches, in this business for somebody. You just have to look around. This expedition is costing a fortune. Revolutionists do not have such money to spend. All this expense is an investment and the returns are in the deal somewhere."

Archer stared at him grimly. He had reached the same conclusion himself long ago, but he betrayed nothing in his expression. "If there are returns on an investment," he said, "they belong to those who made the investment."

"Not if I invest the risk of my life."

"You have already risked that. You signed that risk into your contract as I signed a similar risk in mine."

Blackwell's lower lip protruded and there was sweat on his face. "You've got a deal I haven't got," he said, "and I'm in a position to demand a share. You put me in on the loot on a fair basis or—"

Archer came swiftly to his feet. His left hand moved, then his right. With two quick jerks he ripped the epaulets from Blackwell's shoulders.

"You're reduced two grades to lieutenant, Blackwell," he said grimly, "and I am being patient with you at that. I ought to have you shot."

Blackwell staggered to his feet, his wild eyes fixed upon his epaulets which Archer had tossed upon the table.

"By God," he said, "you can't do that! You aren't even an officer in an army. This isn't an army unless San Martin accepts it. You can't—"

"I can stand you against a wall as easily as I stripped those epaulets."

Archer's eyes were coldly level and Blackwell became suddenly aware of the danger in which he stood. His face became a sickly flounder white and his lower jaw dropped. He swayed for a moment, then turned to the tent flap.

"I guess I drank too much," he muttered.

Archer let him go, but his face remained grimly rigid after the other man's shuffling step was no longer audible. Until the baptism of fire a commander of mercenary troops is commander by a strange code of sufferance. There is

something of the wolf pack in it: a watchful eyeing of the lead wolf by those who follow. In that critical period of campaigning without fighting a good second-in-command is the commander's most potent weapon of command, the direct link with the troops: a bad second is a threat to the command, a threat to unity. Reducing Blackwell in rank deprived him of much power for trouble-making, but left him still in a position to do great harm.

"If it comes to that, I won't be the first commander to regret not shooting a man who needed shooting," Archer said reflectively.

IN THE morning Archer read the orders of the day which stepped a pale and silent Blackwell down two grades and which made Greg Kelly of Kentucky a captain and second-in-command. Kelly, whose black hair curled over his forehead and whose eyes hid reckless laughter, had been a sergeant of militia on the frontier.

"It's a big mistake you made, Colonel," he said, "and a captaincy is far above my station, but let them that thinks so try to prove it."

Archer gripped his hand. "If they prove it, I'll make you a private," he said.

They resumed the march across a seemingly endless sea of grass. Sometimes on a rise of ground it was like pausing for a moment upon the crest of a great roller. They could see the great grasses in eternal motion from horizon to horizon, cattle and horses dwarfed in the sweeping immensity. Men could go mad in a land like this, so the Americans took their turn with the Chilenos in riding on scouting parties. It kept them sharpened up and they became familiar with the habits of the country; particularly with the peculiarities of the gauchos.

These riders of the plains came frequently without warning from the depths of their grassy sea, hands on their weapons and curiosity in their eyes. So long as they were unchallenged they were good-natured and as fond of showing off as small boys, but they turned up at every camping place. Two of them tailed Archer's column on the day that he changed his second-in-command. Garcia, who had not yet been summoned by Carrera, was riding on Archer's left. Archer looked back at the gauchos and frowned.

"How do we know that these fellows are not spies?" he said.

Garcia shrugged. "Why should they be, my colonel?"

"Perhaps someone is paying them."

"Pay a gaucho? That could be done. But bribe him? Señor, you do not know these men. Make a suggestion to a gaucho that he does not like and his knife answers."

"Somebody can make a deal with their leaders."

"They have no leaders, señor. If the gaucho had a leader, that leader would be a gaucho with ambition. Such a gaucho, señor, has never been born."

Archer shrugged. He did not quite believe that. He rode for some miles in silence and a rider came back along his column from Carrera's command. He saluted and held out a sheet of paper—a military order.

> From General José Miguel Carrera—
> To Colonel Craig Archer:
>
> Lieutenant Garcia will accompany the bearer of this message for assignment to the duty already discussed with you. The bearer, Lieutenant Lescano, will replace him in your command upon completion of this order.
>
> You are requested also to assign to this command, Lieutenant Andrew Blackwell, who will be assigned to liaison duties.

Archer read the order, then raised his eyes to Lescano. He saw a broad-faced, narrow-eyed man whose features were as wooden as those of an Indian.

"Do you know Lieutenant Blackwell?" he said.

"Si, señor. He that was the major."

"Ride down the line, convey my compliments and request him to report to me."

The man went off at an easy lope and Archer turned to Garcia. "General Carrera is recalling you for a special mission," he said.

Garcia saluted, but his face was sud-

dently without expression. "Si, señor."

"I have discussed it with him. It is a position of trust. You are to convey dispatches to General San Martin. I know of no other mission."

Archer trusted to Garcia's intelligence to catch both the reassurance and the warning. If Carrera changed the instruction, Garcia would be on guard. The man's eyes conveyed his understanding.

"*Gracias*, señor. It has been a privilege to serve under you. I will remember."

Lescano came back with Blackwell and the sly cunning in the demoted officer's eyes told Archer that Blackwell himself had angled for this chance. He informed him curtly of the order and watched the three men ride away.

"The court martial that kicked that specimen out of the United States Army made no mistake," he thought. "Let us see how he fares with Carrera."

CHAPTER VI

THE GENERAL'S SOCKS

THEY camped that night in the clearing of Mission San Barromeo. It was a lonely structure built of yellow clay brick with a wall of the same material surrounding it. The bells in the belfry rang a welcome to the army of Carrera and rang thereafter at irregular intervals for no ascertainable reason. Archer sprawled beside a campfire with his troops, a nightly practice of his. The talk usually swung to the events of the day, slight though they were. Tonight someone mentioned the gauchos.

"They like to show off too much." Duffy, a lean-jawed lad from Ohio spat into the fire. "Maybe one of them would whip one of us, but ten of 'em wouldn't whip ten of us."

There were emphatic nods of approval around the fire. Like Archer himself, these men had been sizing up every stranger as a possible foe and weighing his possibilities. They neither over-estimated nor under-estimated and, very decidedly, they were not afraid.

"You take the Chilenos now," Taylor, a Tennesseean, drawled. "They're good men—but careless. The only place they've got any discipline is on parade or review, like they were back there in Buenos Aires. That's because they like parade. They post sentries but a man with his wits could steal their general's socks any night he wanted 'em."

Archer's eyes gleamed. "Suppose that you and I get their general's socks, then," he said.

There was a sudden shifting, a leaning forward around the fire. These were soldiers and this was a prank, an exploit that would make conversation around campfires yet to be. They all looked at Archer. He was smiling easily, his eyes on Taylor.

The Tennessean was a lath-like individual with muscles under his skin like braided rope, hollows in his cheeks and a slow grin. He turned the grin on now. "I reckon!" he said. "When do you want to start?"

Archer looked at the low-hanging stars, then cocked his head to the faint strumming music beyond the corner of the mission wall a couple of hundred yards away.

"Two hours," he said. "The socks might be hard to get while the general was awake."

He left the fire and the men who were still chuckling at his sally. The great grasses were murmuring in a rising wind and they seemed to embody in that murmur all of the restlessness in the world. Archer's pulse beats quickened. He needed action with a spice of danger in it. The march had been monotonous, had taken the edge off him. Silly as this proposed exploit might be, it was a tonic for a soldier's nerves.

Carrera would be furious but he would take it out on his sentries. Archer would see to that. Probably there would be reprisals later but in the meantime the Americans would have a triumph over their comrades in arms, and they would have the feeling that their commander was one of them. Battles had been won on the momentum of such trifling things.

"Besides," Archer whispered, "it will be damn good fun."

Lescano was waiting and Archer dismissed him. The fellow was an obvious

spy of Carrera's and he resented him in the place of Garcia. Since Garcia had neither come back nor communicated with him, he was probably on his way to Mendoza and the camp of San Martin.

It was a long two hours of waiting but Archer slipped quietly back to the campfire at last. Taylor was waiting for him and the men, lying in various attitudes suggesting sleep, watched them go.

"Their sentries sort of wake up just before they give their report," Taylor whispered. "Once they give it, they figure they are through for an hour."

Archer nodded. "We'll time them."

The American sentry had already been tipped off and refused to see them as they passed his post. They dropped flat then, frontier fashion, and crawled. By agreement neither Archer nor Taylor carried weapons. They had to chance snakes in the tall grass and stinging flies and vicious crawling insects, but they had become hardened to those things. They saw the fading campfires in the sleep-locked camp of the Chilenos. The mission bell chimed suddenly for a few minutes, then banged off into silence. Taylor swore softly.

"Noisy damn church!" he said.

THE camp stirred restlessly until the last echoes of the bells died away. The two men held their positions until the restless movement quieted, then inched slowly forward again. Suddenly there was a thin cry from a far corner of the camp, taken up and repeated, in tenor, baritone and bass, around the full circle of the sentry line.

"Sentinela alerta!"

The cry rose and fell as each sentry called it to the next in line and waited for the answering assurance. As the first cry had come from a distant point, so the last cry faded into distance. The sentinels were alert, the camp slept, all was well.

Archer nodded to Taylor and they resumed their progress. The *"alerta"* had fixed the position of the nearest sentry and they reconnoitered his post. He was seated on the ground with his knees drawn up and his head resting on his knees. They swung wide of him and entered the sleeping camp.

There were fires reduced now to glowing charcoal. Around these fires lay men wrapped in blankets. The aisles between groups were clearly defined and the two Americans walked upright on the theory that boldness disarms a drowsy observer. When they reached the tents of the officers, however, they hugged the ground again. Carrera's tent stood in majestic isolation and a sentry might be expected there. There was no sound save the chirping of insects—and there was no sentry on duty.

Archer frowned. Knowing Carrera and his love of display, that was a false note. He beckoned Taylor close, signalled him to keep watch and approached the flap of the tent. There was neither light nor sound. He pressed against the flap and listened, then wriggled in through the smallest possible aperture.

There was madness in this, of course: risk to the point of folly for a trifling stake. With people as impulsive as the Latinos, a shot or the swift glitter of a knife usually preceded investigation; and soldiers are trained during maneuvers that are not themselves devoid of risk.

Archer held his breath in the dark interior of the tent and there was still no sound. His eyes accustomed themselves to the blackness and he was able to distinguish the rough outlines of the furnishings; two chairs, a table and a cot. The second chair puzzled him until he determined that it was lying on its side. The table, too, had been pushed away from its normal position and rested against the right side of the tent.

Archer exhaled slowly and nerves crawled under his skin. Something was wrong. There was no sound of breathing. Archer approached the cot until he was standing over it. The figure wrapped in a blanket did not stir. Archer dropped to one knee and touched his hand to the ground to steady himself. His hand rested in something wet and he raised it quickly. His senses were sharpened by the darkness and the heavy odor that assailed his nostrils was unmistakable. Blood!

This sleeper, then, was one who would

not awaken. Archer leaned close and moved the blanket, half turning the body. It was dark and he had to feel for the man's face. His hands recognized the uniform of his own American unit and as his fingers gripped the corpse by the shoulder, he could feel the roughness of ripped threads where epaulets had been torn away violently. He reached across the body and felt the other shoulder. He had no doubt, then. He had torn those epaulets off himself.

Blackwell had made his last bargain.

The silence was so intense that it seemed to hum—then outside the bells of San Barromeo chimed dolefully. The shock threw Archer off balance and for a moment his hands were against the ground, supporting the weight of his body. Something wiggled under his hand and even as his tight nerves shouted "Snake!" he knew that it was not so. His fingers found the oval medal at the end of the woven thong and he knew that medal in the blackest dark as the mate of the one in his own pocket.

There had been more than one Carrera, then, in this tent tonight. And Blackwell, who wanted so much, had died with his hand clutching the medal of the fool while the bells of San Barromeo chimed without reason.

The tent flap was suddenly fluttered in Taylor's signal of danger and Archer rolled the corpse back into its position of deep sleep. It was time to go.

THE two Carreras were coming down the aisles between the sleeping men, preceded by two soldiers. Archer and Taylor pressed close to the ground and, shadowed by the tent, retreated crabwise. Archer was tempted to risk a position at the rear of the tent for the chance of hearing the plans of the two brothers for the disposal of the body, but there were too many things at stake. By the time the general and his brother had reached the tent, the two Americans were twenty feet away.

They rose to a crouch and regarded the sleeping sentry.

They increased the distance rapidly as a lantern lighted within made the tent a veritable beacon. At the edge of the sentry line, they rose to a crouch. The sentry at this point, like his comrade further down the line, dozed with his head on his knees. Taylor looked at him and shrugged. It is even easier than I claimed, his shrug said, to enter the

camp of these undisciplined Chilenos.

Not, however, until they were well clear of the camp did the two men risk speech. "I did not get his socks," Archer said.

"Faith knows that you couldn't; since he was wearing them."

The Tennessean rubbed his lean jaw. The two men were sitting behind a screen of tall grass to rest before crossing their own lines. When Archer did not reply, Taylor shook his head.

"The venture was a good one," he said, "but the telling of it will be a bit flat."

It was the line of thought that Archer wanted him to take. He had no intention of telling his own men what he had actually found in the tent, but he disliked letting them down when their imaginations had been stirred.

"We've proved something to ourselves," he said, "but not to the troop, Taylor."

"Right, sir." Taylor stroked his jaw again, then raised his head. "I could go back and get the gun of that sentry."

Archer shook his head. "The general would have him shot."

He had been thinking only of the one man who would pay the utmost price for their adventure if they made a single sentry the victim, and he did not see the quick look that Taylor threw him. An officer who scruples to waste the life of an obscure soldier wins the regard of other soldiers who are themselves obscure.

Taylor nodded his head. "Ay, sir, that's true. Will you leave the telling of a tale to me in the camp?"

Archer's eyes gleamed. "If it's a good tale."

"It will be. A soldier is never the worse for being a good liar, sir."

"You're right there."

Archer rose swiftly. It was what he wanted and he was eager to be off. Like gliding ghosts, they returned to their own lines, gave the countersign and made their way back to the glowing embers of the campfire where those who had been in on their plan lay wrapped in their blankets. There was a swift stir as they approached and the blankets discharged their occupants. Taylor slipped into the center of the group, leaving Archer on the edge.

"Well, we did and we didn't," he said.

There was a murmur from the group around him which he pretended not to notice. "The sentries were calling their alerts in their sleep like we suspected," he said, "and no patrol to check them."

He sketched, with no neglect of drama, the sudden clamor of bells, the aisle of sleeping men and the general's tent in the center of the camp.

"Black as your hat, it was," he said, "but the colonel, he slipped in like a red Indian and left me crouching there with my heart in my mouth, guarding the flap. Pretty soon I hear the general muttering aloud in his sleep as the colonel tickles his feet getting the socks off. Sleeps in his socks, the general does. Then out comes the colonel and we're off."

"Where's the socks?" a voice said.

"I'm coming to that. Them Chilenos sleep like they're waiting for Gabriel. Being used to them we come out faster than we go in. Not one of 'em stirs and the sentries, sleeping like the rest, are dreaming about '*alerta*' and letting it go at that. Then safe away from the camp —whew!"

Taylor mopped his brow with his hand and shook it so that the fingers snapped together. "Did you ever step on a dog at night? Me, that's what I did in the dark and it weren't no dog. Just as I goes down all out of balance with a soft body rolling under me, a big hand reaches for my throat and I see a knife coming at me."

Taylor paused and drew a deep breath. "It was one of them damn gauchos that's been following us all day and if the colonel hadn't dropped the general's socks to choke the savvy out of him, I wouldn't be telling you anything now."

Archer slipped quietly away from the group. "Taylor will do," he chuckled. "I'll have to make him a sergeant."

ONCE alone in his own tent Archer's chuckle died. He took the medal from his pocket, still fastened to the broken thong. There was blood on the thong

and some of it had dried in the shield on the back of the medal—the shield with the inscription, *Gold is never owned. It belongs only to its possessor.*

Blackwell's blood had sealed the mockery of its shedding on the medal of the fool. The man had staked his life recklessly for gold which he could not even see; for gold which passed from owner to owner, the least permanent of all possessions, belonging momentarily to one man or another yet owned by none.

The medal was not all nonsense. There was something there besides a few idle phrases. Archer laid it aside and reconstructed swiftly in his own mind what must have happened out there in the camp of the Chilenos.

The two Carreras had come back to the camp with two men, but in the meantime, the tent of the general had been left unguarded with the corpse on the bunk in a blanket. Obviously Miguel Carrera had not been guilty of such carelessness. If he had killed a man in his own tent, he would have had the body disposed of before he left the tent. That was sound reasoning, even if the medal and the broken thong did not already name Hernando Carrera as the murderer.

Miguel, then, had been away from the camp. He liked to visit the priests in these lonely missions and talk philosophy with them. Probably he had left a sentry before the tent. Hernando had come in his absence with a man of his own. Archer stiffened.

He had a sudden picture of Blackwell proposing a deal to Hernando such as he had proposed to Archer himself. Hernando was a deadly type; the type that proposes conspiracies himself, profits from them and betrays his co-conspirators.

Archer had sensed that streak in him during their only conversation. Hernando had alarmed Miguel, then, though he might only have been testing Archer when he said: "Only kings have jesters and perhaps it is written that the colonels shall be kings."

Such a man as Hernando would encourage a man who came to him with the light of conspiracy burning in his eyes. With skillful leading, Blackwell would go too far. He had shown little enough understanding of his own kind and he would lack entirely the subtlety essential to the understanding of a Latin. Whatever he did or said, ultimately, had been something that called down swift and savage fury on him.

"IS GOD DEAD?"

(as this war grows worse Americans are asking that question)

Well I can say to them that God is most certainly NOT dead for I TALKED WITH GOD, and as a result of that little talk with God a strange Power came into my life. After 42 years of horrible, dismal, sickening failure, everything took on a brighter hue. It's fascinating to talk with God, and it can be done very easily once you learn the secret. And when you do—well—there will come into your life the same dynamic Power which came into mine. The shackles of defeat which bound me for years went a-shimmering—and now—?—well, I own control of the largest daily newspaper in our County, I own the largest office building in our City, I drive a beautiful Cadillac limousine. I own my own home which has a lovely pipe-organ in it, and my family are abundantly provided for after I'm gone. And all this has been made possible because one day, ten years ago, I actually and literally talked with God.

You, too, may experience that strange mystical Power which comes from talking with God, and when you do, if there is poverty, unrest, unhappiness, or ill-health in your life, well—this same God-Power is able to do for you what it did for me. No matter how useless or helpless your life seems to be—all this can be changed. For this is not a human Power I'm talking about—it's a God-Power. And there can be no limitations to the God-Power, can there? Of course not. You probably would like to know how you, too, may talk with God, so that this same Power which brought me these good things might come into your life, too. Well—just write a letter or a postcard to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 105, Moscow, Idaho, and full particulars of this strange Teaching will be sent to you free of charge. But write now—while you are in the mood. It only costs one cent to find out, and this might easily be the most profitable one cent you have ever spent. It may sound unbelievable—but it's true, or I wouldn't tell you it was.—Advt. Copyright, 1942, Frank B. Robinson.

Archer shook his head. The next move was Carrera's and he, Archer, felt no obligation to avenge Blackwell. The man had schemed for stakes beyond his stupid wits and he had left Archer of his own free will. Still, Carrera would have to be held in line.

He rolled himself in his blankets and wiped all thought and all conflict from his mind. The night was made for sleep and the day for decision.

The bells of San Barromeo chimed again as he closed his eyes and he cursed them without knowing that he had cursed.

CHAPTER VII

THE BELLS OF SAN BARROMEO

IN THE morning Archer had evidence that Taylor's story had gone the rounds. The men were in good humor and there was a new regard in their eyes when they looked at him. As a postscript to the story, Taylor had credited Archer with swearing in Spanish at the gaucho as he throttled him "so that regaining consciousness he would believe that some Chileno had done it to him." That was even better in some respects than possession of a general's socks and the guile of Taylor lay in the fact that he had glorified Archer. If he had made himself the hero, his story might have been questioned: as it was, it was accepted and the more often it was told to those who had not heard it originally, the truer it became.

Lescano, the new liaison officer, rode with Archer and as they passed the mission for the trail once more, Archer looked glumly at the bells. The Chileno interpreted the look.

"The ringing of them is a penance, señor," he said. "Some monk has sinned grievously in his life. When he remembers his sin, he must leave his food or his sleep and ring the bells to summon the angels. There are many such."

"No one man could have such an uneasy conscience," Archer growled. "They must all have long memories."

Lescano crossed himself. "It is good for man to remember his sins," he said. The thought seemed to depress him and he lapsed into silence.

At the edge of the clearing beyond the mission, General José Miguel Carrera waited, astride his big black horse. He had a guard of two officers with him and at a gesture, Lescano dropped back and joined them, leaving room for Carrera to ride beside Archer. The general's face was grave.

"I have to report a misfortune," he said. "The officer with whom you, yourself, had trouble drank too deeply last night of *caña*. He died, Colonel, and how I know not."

"Why was I not informed?"

"He was discovered only this morning. Nothing could be done. The good fathers, with whom I dined last night, will give him Christian burial and, although he was a man of no faith, I left money with them for masses."

"That was damned kind of you."

"His soul will need help, my friend."

"Probably. And maybe some day your brother will enter a monastery and keep people awake ringing bells."

"My brother! I do not understand." Carrera's face was white.

"I think you do. Your sentries are no good."

Archer reached into his pocket, withdrew the medal on the thong and passed it to his commander. Carrera stared at it, then put it away. Backed to the wall, he faced whatever was to be faced. He shrugged expressively.

"Truth is truth," he said, "and I am as honest as you are. Will you miss him or will I?"

"You threatened once to replace me with my second-in-command."

"A jest. My life is in the hands of my officers. I do not put my life in such hands as his."

Archer's eyes were hard. "You had better watch your humor and your sentries," he said. "Either can get you into trouble."

"I will remember." Carrera bowed his head gravely. He asked no explanation of the medal which Archer had given him and, in that, he showed once more the tact that was in him. He knew when to accept a fact as a fact without going behind it. For his own part, Archer

held a grim determination in his mind.

He would serve his men and serve himself rather than the Brothers Carrera when Fate opened a way for him.

EACH day on the trail was like the day before, but finally the sharp outlines of the Sierra de Cordoba thrust upward from the horizon and the grassy sea was all but crossed. They skirted the edge of San Luis de la Punta, a fair-sized city, while curious natives came out to watch the cavalcade pass. Ahead of them was rolling hill country and rocky trails. Where the trail they followed topped a rise above a fertile valley, they caught their first sight of troops coming out to meet them.

There were no more than a hundred men in the troop of cavalry that crossed the valley below; but there was splendor astride, and power and that indefinable élan that distinguishes a crack cavalry unit even while distance reduces it in scale. They rode in a column of route, sections of fours, with the sun glittering on their lances. Archer rode up to confer with Carrera. The general's face was a study.

"They ride out boldly," he said. "It is perhaps an escort sent to meet us."

His voice conveyed more than a shade of doubt. Archer looked at him sharply. "It can hardly be anything else," he said, "since you announced yourself to San Martin."

Carrera's eyes were startled for the moment, completely off-guard as he strove to remember something that he had permitted to slip from his memory.

Archer stiffened. "Garcia!" he said. "Did you send him to San Martin, or did the monks bury him, too?"

"*Santissima!* You startle me with your thunders. Of a certainty, I sent the lieutenant. But I have no reply. If the men of O'Higgins found him first, those soldiers are, perhaps, not friends."

Archer's eyes were narrowed and the suspicion in his mind would not down. "I hope that we will find Lieutenant Garcia at Mendoza," he said.

There was a grim note of warning in his voice and Carrera looked at him from the corners of his eyes. "My colonel," he said, "you forever disappoint me. With you, life is so difficult. Under the hooves of your horse many grasses died as you rode across the pampa, other grass escaped those hooves. Who ordained the grass to live, the grass to die, the ant you crush, the ant that flees your foot. *Quien sabe?* You, who are the instrument of destruction, do not ordain those things."

"We were talking about a man; not grass and not ants."

"Grass or ants or men: it is the same thing. When you have seen as many men die as I have, then you will know. In the meantime, you suffer needlessly."

"Perhaps. I still want to see Garcia at Mendoza."

Archer remained beside Carrera as they rode down a curving trail that brought them to the plain. The lancers were drawn up in parade formation awaiting them and Archer noted uneasily that the terrain favored a murderously successful charge if these troops were hostile. Carrera's men, with Archer's behind them, were coming down the trail in twos, with no space in which to maneuver. Carrera, too, saw the danger and issued the command for sections of fours, the rear rank twos moving abreast of the front rank twos as soon as the wide ground of the plain was reached.

Out in the sun of the plain, the ranks of lancers waited quietly while the long queue of horsemen wound down the hill; then suddenly a group of four moved out across the plain. Archer stiffened in the saddle when he recognized the powerful commanding figure who dominated the group. Carrera, seeming to sense his sudden tension, threw him a glance; then looked swiftly again at the approaching horsemen.

"Danning?" he said.

"Yes."

"Remember your promise!"

"I am remembering."

Archer sat stiffly in the saddle. The approaching officers made a fine showing. They wore uniforms of a dark but brilliant blue, faced with the inevitable red, tricornered hats of French inspiration, saddles ornamented richly in silver. The men behind them were similarly uni-

formed save that they wore cloth helmets, curved to protect the bases of their necks from the sun. Danning's uniform was frogged and epauleted in gold. His eyes flicked over Archer with a gleam of recognition, then came to rest upon Carrera. He saluted.

"General Carrera?"

"I am he."

"The respects of General San Martin who welcomes you to Mendoza. I am Colonel Danning, commanding your escort and at your service, sir."

Carrera expanded visibly. "An escort of such magnificence is a great honor," he said.

Danning saluted again, gave an order to his officers and turned his horse deftly into position on Carrera's left.

THE lancers wheeled from line to oblique echelon and opened a gate through which Carrera's men might pass. Archer once more experienced the uneasy sensation that here again, if treachery were contemplated, the lancers, although outnumbered better than two to one, were in a position to wreak havoc on the larger force.

Reason brushed this thought aside as the morbid fancy of a born cavalryman. If treachery were in the wind, Danning would have had a larger force under his command. In all probability the number was deliberately calculated to be less than half of Carrera's advance party: a Latin subtlety that would never enter the head of an American commander.

Carrera was making himself pleasant to Danning. "I do not recall meeting you before I left for the United States, Colonel."

"I have been here only six months, sir."

Danning was being politely correct and according Carrera all of the deference due a general, but there was something vastly impersonal about him as though this were merely another tour of duty to which he gave a soldier's salute to symbols without compromising himself. Carrera had not presented Archer to him, so he accepted the nonexistence of the officer who had not been included in the conversation. Carrera was smiling, exuding cordiality.

"And my good friend, General O'Higgins? He is quite well, I hope."

"General O'Higgins is in excellent health. He is, as you can imagine, extremely busy."

"Ah, yes! I remember him as always extremely busy." There was a shade of malice in Carrera's inflection, but the smile remained. "You need no introduction, of course, to Colonel Archer. I understand that you met in Buenos Aires—or before?"

Danning looked at Archer for the first time since he accorded his first salute to Carrera. "Our time in Buenos Aires was all too short," he said. "How are you, Colonel Archer?"

"Still fortunate, thank you."

Archer's speech was clipped, his lips a tight line. He was recalling that message to Rodriguez and he was mentally cursing the promise that blocked him from a showdown with Danning. Danning read hostility in his attitude and a crease of bewilderment appeared on his forehead. Carrera seemed to notice nothing of this.

"Colonel Archer is jealous of his friendships," he said, "or I would have had the pleasure of meeting you before."

It was a fishing expedition but Danning was too wise to take the bait. He sensed undercurrents and chose to ignore them.

"Discretion is seldom a fault in a soldier," he said.

Archer stared straight ahead and his mind said: "Damn the man! He is beginning to talk like a Latino and he is trying to patronize me."

The Andes, which had long dominated the horizon, came closer with each turn of the road as the cavalcade entered, once more, a low line of hills. They towered to the heavens in imposing, white-capped glory, endless in their column of march from north to south. Clouds rested on the higher peaks and flattened their outlines, but other peaks thrust upward in sharp clarity. Here was a barrier built by gods who wrought in might and majesty, contemptuous of trifles. Men became as insects before their handiwork; but across that barrier

lay Chilé and puny men who had crossed the barrier in the bitterness of their defeat and were building again with the patience of ants.

Mendoza spread out on the flat approach to the imposing backdrop of the peaks, a city built by an army. Danning seemed to grow straighter and taller in the saddle. He was an Englishman, schooled in the control of emotions, but his voice shook when he spoke.

"That is the factory and the forge," he said, "from which the freedom of Chile will flow."

Carrera removed his military hat and held it against his heart. Archer said nothing, acted nothing, but something stirred in him. This was the writing of history and he was in the shadow of the barricades.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARMY OF THE ANDES

THERE were ten thousand uniformed men at Mendoza and nearly three thousand laborers. More than half the men had their families with them, and the adobe houses stretched row upon row along the wide streets that crossed one another at right angles. There were drill grounds, arsenals and forges turning out weapons, corrals to which gauchos delivered stock rounded up on the pampa, stables in long lines for cavalry horses and grazing grounds for thousands of mules. Over all of it there was a sense of discipline which tolerated neither slovenly living nor lax conduct.

Archer looked at Mendoza with amazement and there was sweat on the face of Miguel Carrera. The dream had been that with crack mercenaries a former General of Chile could drive a bargain for command. The reality was here in this vast camp which absorbed one hundred and fifty Americans and the one hundred Chileno advance guard without effort. Danning, aware of the impression which the camp created, said nothing until they were well within the camp.

"Your men will be accommodated, General Carrera," he said, "at the west barracks to which Major Vallejo will conduct them. General San Martin requests that you accept as your own the house to which I will escort you. He will confer with you after vespers this evening."

Carrera moistened his lips. His eyes were still shocked. "General San Martin is kind," he said. "I look forward to our meeting with eagerness."

Danning was in command of the situation and knew it, but he was still observing all of the amenities of rank. He bowed to Archer.

"If you will, Colonel Archer, my home is at your disposal."

Archer caught a warning glance from Carrera before he had a chance to reply and he knew that the situation was even more grave now than when Carrera had warned him that a personal feud would jeopardize the mission. He returned Danning's bow.

"Thank you," he said.

Danning raised his eyebrows at the tone. "I will call for you after you have had a chance to dispose of details with General Carrera," he said.

It was tact again, with perhaps a touch of strategy in it. He was giving the two leaders of this expedition a chance to exchange opinions, confident that they could offer little encouragement to each other on the basis of what they had seen. Archer rode back down the line and turned over billeting authority to his newly-made captain, Greg Kelly of Kentucky. Kelly's smile was wide.

"If this is our army, Colonel," he said, "then, by the bones of Washington, without seeing the other fellows, I am betting on us."

Archer's smile was tight. "Keep the men together, don't fraternize too much and don't take too much for granted," he said. "There are matters to be negotiated. I hold you responsible for the conduct of the troop."

Kelly's smile faded. "Right, sir."

Archer rode back. Carrera was installed in one of the few stone houses in Mendoza: five rooms with furniture of solid, polished wood, somber Spanish paintings on the wall, a small patio with a statue of the Virgin in a niche. Car-

rera was pacing the floor, grinding the palms of his hands together as he paced.

"That devil, O'Higgins!" he said. "He has disarmed me. We are trapped, Colonel."

"It is poor leadership that takes a force into a situation that has not been reconnoitered," Archer said bluntly.

Carrera continued to pace. "Send scouts across the pampa where every blade of grass tells secrets? Bah!"

"This did not grow out here without the knowledge of Buenos Aires. Where was your brother, your friends?"

"You share the predicament, Colonel."

"What do you suggest?"

Carrera resumed his pacing. "This is far from Buenos Aires. They have grown careless. My brother was careless." The words came jerkily, explosively. "They were pleased in Buenos Aires that they were rid of San Martin. They did not care what he did. My brother's spies deceived him. They told him that San Martin had not paid his troops and that they were deserting him in droves."

"Couldn't he find out?"

"That is the factory and forge from which the freedom of Chile will flow."

"This is impossible. San Martin has no money. O'Higgins has none. There are people in Buenos Aires who encouraged San Martin to help Chile. Because they loved Chile? Because they cared what Spain did beyond the Andes? Bah! They wanted to get rid of him. Such a soldier, when he is honest, can be a great nuisance." He whipped around savagely. "But nobody is fool enough to give him resources."

"For someone who does have resources, you are in a predicament," Archer said slowly.

"He talked to many of the men who left San Martin and O'Higgins. Many of my men are those who refused to follow longer the leaders who could not provide pay for men who worked and risked their lives. I talked to them myself." Carrera pressed his knuckles against his temples. "I cannot understand it."

Archer sat in a chair with his legs straight out and stared at the man with whom he had allied his destiny. He was

feeling as he had felt on that last night on La Plata when he learned for the first time that Carrera was only an adventurer and not the head of a government, revolutionary or otherwise. Now, in his desperation of the moment, Carrera was saying things that he would probably regret later. Archer shrugged.

"Suppose that San Martin decides to surprise Buenos Aires as he has surprised you," he said. "This army of his

side and Carrera broke off with a signal for discretion. Archer rose to his feet as Danning entered. The Englishman bowed to Carrera and addressed himself to Archer.

"I have had your gear taken to my own house, Colonel," he said. "Shall we follow it?"

"Thank you."

Archer moved with him to the door and left Carrera to his brooding.

would remove your smart politicians from power."

"And forget the campaign against Chile?" Carrera's eyes gleamed suddenly with a fierce indefinable hope. As suddenly the gleam died. He snapped his fingers. "You do not know San Martin!" he said. "Nor O'Higgins. O'Higgins would not move against Buenos Aires. He has no interest in it."

Boot heels clicked on the stone out-

OUTSIDE the sun was hot as it approached midday but Mendoza, which was 2700 feet above sea level, enjoyed a cooling breeze from the snow-covered Andes. Archer's horse, his coat glistening from a fresh combing, was waiting for him. He mounted and followed where Danning led.

The glory of Mendoza dimmed slightly under a soldier's discerning eye as

close inspection revealed the desperate struggle under the shining surface. There were no other troops like the glittering lancers of the escort. The infantry wore light, two-piece uniforms of an uneven blue and were without any covering on their feet. Cavalry units, mounted on mules, wore similar uniforms, *alpargatas* on their feet like the gauchos.

Danning turned his mount into a long street where women worked at looms and wheels in shed-like structures open on four sides. "Our uniform factory," he said. "In the next street there are other women who cut and sew and dye the finished cloth."

They passed a cleared space where wires stretched between poles were run through musket barrels. "Testing division," Danning said. "If a musket barrel is not true, it shows up on the wires."

There was a symphony of ringing hammers, whirring wheels and hissing forges; but there were, too, evidences of poverty. Everyone, man or woman, seemed to have work to do, but the houses were poor, without furniture or conveniences. Danning, as though aware that Archer was noting the contrasts, looked grave.

"These are a great people," he said.

The sense of comradeship is strong between two men who can ride together with little need for speech. Archer was feeling it in spite of himself. Danning, by merely being himself, wore well. Archer had to force himself to remember the message to Rodriguez.

They turned at last into a street that was narrower than the others. Behind two spreading trees was a low stone house with a red roof and a walled-in patio. Archer dismounted with his host and they entered the patio where a fountain played and where a cool breath seemed to exude from the stones. There was a table against a shading wall and an Indian servant appeared like a genie out of the bottle. Danning signaled to him with a gesture of his hand and he disappeared, to return in a very few minutes with filled glasses.

"A drink we have evolved from *caña*," Danning said, "and quite the thing for midday, I assure you."

He held his glass and when Archer failed to touch it, he drank anyway. "Now see here," he said as he put his glass down. "There's some canker eating you. Out with it before I introduce you to my wife."

"Your wife!"

"Right. There are men foolish enough, you know, to take their wives on these excursions."

"I never thought about it."

"No reason why you should. Now, about the canker?"

"You make it awkward. I am pledged not to quarrel with you."

"Pledge or no pledge, why should you?"

Archer was not a politician and he could not fence with a man who sought straight answers. He had barely touched his drink and he set the glass on the table.

"You left Buenos Aires in a hurry," he said.

"As I advised you was necessary."

"I had scarcely finished my breakfast when a note came to my host warning him that I was allied to General Carrera."

Danning's lips pursed and his eyes widened. "My word! To Rodriguez? Did he fight another duel with you?"

The look of astonishment, tinged with quick interest in Danning's face was a greater testimonial to his lack of guilt than a score of affidavits. Archer stared at him, then shook his head.

"Not quite. He cancelled all introductions, chose to know me no longer and requested me to leave his house."

Archer's lips tightened with the recollection. He did not mention Señorita Ysabel but he was remembering. Danning's broad, red face betrayed his struggle between amusement and reserve.

"By Wellington and Waterloo," he said, "I'd have given my next consignment of Scotch to see that. Rodriguez discovering that he had a friend of Carrera's in his house!"

"It was not very funny."

"Not to you, of course. My apologies, old man. But that is a hate for the ages. Rodriguez spits like a wildcat when Carrera is mentioned."

"Why?"

The mask of discretion settled down

over the face of the Englishman. He shrugged his heavy shoulders. "I know nothing about the matter save hearsay and only fools repeat hearsay. Rodriguez, however, is a real patriot. He loves his country and he suffers for it and if he swaggers a bit, he has earned the right."

Danning broke off suddenly and leaned slightly toward Archer. "By God!" he said. "You thought that I sent that note to Rodriguez."

Archer lifted his glass. He could be as honest when he was wrong as when he was right. "I did," he said. "I was wrong. I regret the thought."

"Thank you, sir."

Danning touched his nearly empty glass to Archer's and they drank. The Englishman made no attempt to deny, or even discuss, an offense with which he was no longer charged. Archer liked that in him. Now that he permitted himself to think calmly, there were many people in Buenos Aires. Any of them who knew Rodriguez and who knew Carrera could have sent that message.

Danning had risen to his feet. "Siesta time has stolen upon us," he said. "An exceedingly sane institution, the siesta! You learn to appreciate it. I will show you to your room. A couple of hours will make a new man of you."

He led the way himself to a cool, twilight-dim room off the patio where the hush seemed centuries old. There was a bed with the cover turned back and Archer's clothes were already unpacked. Off the room there was a narrow closet-like space with a grilled floor. This, Danning explained, was a shower-bath. He had arranged it so that water from a tank on the roof could be run down onto a perforated saucer of light metal over the closet. The water ran out through the grill beneath. Trust an Englishman to invent baths!

"We'll have tea later. I will have you called," Danning said.

He went out and Archer availed himself of the shower; stinging cold but exhilarating. He sank into soft sheets and the silence settled soothingly down on him. Intrigue and struggles for power were unreal and far away. Swift pictures came and went in his mind: the frightened herds of deer on the pampas, grinning gauchos, women working in Mendoza, soldiers without shoes, the red heavy-jowled face of Danning—Ysabel Rodriguez.

"Now see here," Danning said, "there's some canker eating at you. Out with it!"

Reality and unreality merged into the stuff of dreams—and then he was asleep.

ARCHER awakened with a servant pulling respectfully at the covers. He signified that he was awake and understood, so the servant bowed out. Archer lay there in the cool comfort for a few moments and listened to the sweetly solemn music of the bells. The Angelus was being rung from a number of church towers—there were seven churches in Mendoza as he was to discover later—and there was balm for a weary soul in merely listening to them.

The bells had rung at Mission San Barromeo and he had hated the sound of them, but he felt that he could listen to these bells and feel better for hearing them whether at the end of the siesta or

Chile and Americans who won their independence from Englishmen."

San Martin had no patience with bickering. "Your men do not fit the design of the army that we have built, sir," he said. "It is unfortunate. Many of your Chilenos were tried by this army and found wanting before they joined you."

Carrera's head came up. "They left you, I believe," he said softly, "because they were not paid."

The buttons were off the foils but San Martin's expression did not change. "My statement that they were found wanting is accurate," he said. His voice took on a sudden intensity. "The Army of the Andes is not an army of mercenaries. The men who serve in it help to produce the food that they eat, their wives make uniforms and do a multitude of tasks. There is no reward for any man in Mendoza save the reward that he shares with all Chile—freedom."

CARRERA looked toward Danning and the Englishman flushed. O'Higgins broke in before anyone else could speak. "Our friends from other lands," he said, "are needed technicians who receive far less compensation than they are worth."

Carrera was unperturbed. He looked around the table quietly, then fixed his eyes on General San Martin. "I will not love Chile less than any man," he said. "Since you refuse our services in the Army of the Andes, Excellency, we—my men and I—will serve where glory does not exist, nor reward—only hardship and hazard and death. The Indians in the mountains are a danger to your plan because they will love you no better than a Spaniard, nor see a difference between you. I will clear your path of Indians."

Emotion for the first time showed in the stern face of San Martin. He looked incredulous. "You will lead your men against the Indians and accept that as your role in Chile's fight for freedom?"

Archer, sitting across the table from O'Higgins could see every change of expression in the face of the Chilean leader. General O'Higgins was not merely incredulous: he disbelieved Carrera utterly. Carrera, however, was meeting the eyes of San Martin.

"I hope yet to play a role in Chile," he said. "We will clear the passes for you by conquering the leaders of the Araucanians. I hope then that you will need my command, seasoned and proven in combat."

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Everyone was on his feet now. O'Higgins came around the table and his fingers gripped Archer's arm. "Tell me about yourself," he said in excellent English. "I have been studying your face. It was a pleasant study."

Archer met the smiling geniality of the sturdy commander in kind. He had observed O'Higgins closely, too, and he had liked what he saw. The man was a soldier. It was written in every line of his face and his body. There was pride in him and a certain recklessness and humor. Troops would love him. He would, however, be a poor politician. There was too much of candor and challenge in him: too little of craft and calculation. In a few words Archer sketched his own background and his reasons for leaving the service of the United States. When he mentioned the carriage campaigning in Washington, O'Higgins laughed aloud.

"By Holy Faith," he said, "I would do as you did! Cities and carriages are for the old; wide country and good horses for the young. See me again. We must have a bottle together."

He turned back to the table where

as wooden, but the scar on his left cheek was a sickly white. This was a moment of great decision. Careers and lives hung upon it.

CHAPTER IX

THE LIBERATOR

THE room into which they were led was long and narrow with dark wainscotting, covered with gilt ornaments, carved cornices and fantastic traceries in relief. On each side there was ranged a long line of sofas and high-backed chairs. The windows were high, narrow and grated. Over the tops of the poplars outside were the Andean peaks, touched now with the first gold of the sunset. At the head of a table that was set beneath the windows stood a man of about forty: a tall, dark man with piercing eyes and a roman nose that emphasized the strong forward thrust of his features. Here was stern strength with a streak of austerity in it—a man born to command—General Don José Francisco de San Martin.

On the right hand of the Liberator stood General Bernardo O'Higgins: a handsome man with bold features, a round face, sideburns that were curly like his hair, a mouth that could smile or tighten, eyes capable of humor, but now screened impersonally.

A short, slightly rotund man in the rough brown robe of the Franciscans sat at a little table behind San Martin and a little to his left. He had shrewd brown eyes, an expression of humorous resignation to the absurdities of life upon his face. This was Fray Luis Beltran: mathematician, chemist, engineer, inventor, scribe and priest of God. He remained seated now while his superiors stood, but there was humility in that and not arrogance. A scribe summoned to record what happened, who was he to rise and greet distinguished visitors?

General Don José Miguel de Carrera took one step forward. He bowed low to the dignitaries at the table, hailed San Martin as "Excellency" and offered to him, with all the flowery compliments demanded by etiquette, his personal services and loyalty, his fighting men and the equipment with which they were supplied. Then with a flourish he introduced his "staff." Hernando first, then Archer.

San Martin heard him, standing, replied politely but ignored, temporarily, the offer of the army. O'Higgins, silent until then, expressed his pleasure in a deep resonant voice at again meeting two of his distinguished countrymen and nodded with a smile to Archer. San Martin then gave a signal and the party was seated. Danning took the chair on the Liberator's left. Archer's place on the left of Carrera placed him so that he was facing O'Higgins. The half-Irish leader of the Chilenos seemed more completely relaxed than anyone in the room. The polite formalities, however, were over. San Martin fixed his stern eyes upon Carrera.

"Appreciating deeply the magnificence of your offer," he said, "I find myself under the painful necessity of refusing it. The Army of the Andes is more than an army, it is a plan. We could have more recruits, but our need is not men: our need is best expressed in units. Explain the matter, Colonel."

Danning took his cue instantly. "The Andes have to be conquered before we meet the Spaniards," he said. "We are training to conquer them. Men and armies are going through courses of training so that each man and each animal will know his task and its solution. Fray Beltran has performed marvels in providing us with devices for hauling heavy cannon and the *arriero* corps practices diligently on the loading and unloading of pack animals. We have even experimented with special foods for the altitudes we will encounter."

Carrera listened with a tight, cold smile on his face. "Your *arrieros* and your mechanics will not suffice to win battles from Spaniards," he said.

O'Higgins moved slightly. "The men of Chile have not forgotten how to fight," he said, "nor have their allies of the Argentine who won their independence from Spaniards."

The rival leaders of Chile faced each other across that table. Carrera held to his tight smile. "I, too, have men of

Chile and Americans who won their independence from Englishmen."

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San Martin was talking in low tones to Danning and Fray Beltran. The Franciscan was no longer wrapped in the humility of a scribe, he was sitting in equality upon the board of strategy. Archer turned his back on the group reluctantly. They were the creators of Mendoza and of the Army of the Andes. He felt a strange kinship with them. Of such must the army of George Washington have been: a few men gathered out of the many, but selected for their devotion and their fitness for a task.

Outside the shadows were crowding in upon the veranda and Don José Miguel Carrera was speaking to his brother. "They will give me what I asked," he said. "It never fails. Fight hard for that which you do not care to have and men will compromise with you by giving you what you really want: always provided, of course, that the second seems less than the first."

He laughed and all of the duplicity that was in him rang in that laugh. Archer thought about the inscription that was on the medal of Hernando Carrera—*I have but one face. Beware of him with two.* Did Hernando, he wondered, ever apply that to his own brother.

Miguel turned and saw Archer. He seemed temporarily disconcerted. "My colonel," he said, "will you forgive me if I talk privately to my brother."

"I will enjoy being alone." Archer bowed, wheeled and strode off along the veranda.

SAN MARTIN'S administration building was on high ground and most of the city spread beneath it. The sun was gone and purple shadows were flowing from the hills to engulf the tiny houses of men who toiled that they might some day fight. Archer stopped at a corner of the veranda and he could see tiny stars of light piercing the mist as candles were lighted in their niches beside the doors of houses. Out on the flat plain of the encampment campfires glowed redly. Thin whispers of song and of stringed instruments rode the light breeze. It was good, somehow, to have seen Mendoza whatever might happen in the uncertain hours and days to come.

Archer speculated darkly on that. Carrera, for all his worry and scheming, had not wanted to join the Army of the Andes. It was hard to accept that, at first, and then little things fitted into place. It was not in the man to serve gracefully under O'Higgins. The size of the army at Mendoza had frightened and disconcerted him, but that, perhaps, was because he feared his own fate at the head of an inferior force.

He had been President of Chile and commander-in-chief of the patriot armies. Neither San Martin nor O'Higgins had questioned that claim when he made it. What then had he done that tumbled him from power? These men who professed the same cause treated him politely but not, somehow, with the respect that his background should merit. There was a hidden chapter, somewhere: something had happened that, thus far, Archer did not know. Whatever it was, it did not much matter at the moment.

The big fact was that Miguel Carrera really wanted the seemingly thankless task of campaigning against the Indians. Why?

"Colonel Archer! Do not look down. Can you hear me, señor?"

The voice seemed to come from the boards under Archer's feet. He had to brace himself against the urge to look down. The shrubbery, of course, grew close to the veranda railing here.

"I can hear you, Lieutenant Garcia," he said.

"*Gracias a Dios!* It is good to see you again, my colonel."

Archer's mind worked swiftly. There had been nothing said between Carrera and San Martin to indicate that messages had previously passed between them. Carrera had not acted like a man who had sent greetings ahead—and Garcia had been dispatched on his errand on the day after Carrera found him talking freely with Archer in his tent.

"What happened to you?" he said gruffly.

"*Madre de Dios!* Death missed me by an inch. The two men sent with me were assassins, señor."

"Then what?"

A touch of true Latin braggadocio

came into the voice of the usually meek Garcia. "Me. I am *valiente, muy guapeton.* Death did not have another chance. Nor assassins. I slew those *cabrones* where they stood, señor."

"How about your dispatch to General San Martin?"

"Señor, there was no dispatch. The paper was blank. That is how I know those two *rateros* were assassins. That is why I have the temerity to speak to you."

Archer leaned upon the veranda rail, looking out over the encampment. He believed Garcia. The man had impressed him favorably and this story of the assassins who did not return would explain some of Carrera's nervousness. Garcia's escape under the circumstances made him an enemy and an enemy, however humble, was a source of danger to him in the camp of San Martin.

"What are you doing here at Mendoza?"

"I enlisted as a private soldier, señor. I have been watching for an opportunity to speak to you."

"Speak on!"

"*Gracias,* señor. It is to warn you. You can trust General O'Higgins. Serve him and you serve Chile best. It is your own safety."

"Why?"

"There is no honor in an assassin. He serves his own ends and men die at his whim. It was thus at Rancagua where Free Chile fell wounded, señor. I was there. General Carrera took time for his personal affairs and sent his personal fortune to safety before he marched to reinforce General O'Higgins. He was too late and when he found that he was late, he struck but feebly and shared the retreat rather than a desperate battle."

So this was the story of Rancagua—or was it? Archer's face was grim but still he did not look down. "Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Señor, I held a commission under General Carrera."

"An honorable reason. But why accept that commission, feeling as you did?"

"I would serve under Lucifer to save Chile, señor, if there was no other."

"And now?"

"Now I serve Chile but have no obligation to General Carrera who sought to have me murdered for my friendliness to you."

"You are sure about the reason?"

"What other is there? There were things I knew. He feared perhaps I would tell you as I tell you now."

"Thanks. I will remember."

Heels clicked along the boards of the veranda and Archer straightened. Garcia's whisper came from the shadows of the shrubbery.

"*Vaya con Dios,* my colonel. I will pray for you."

"*Adios,* Lieutenant Garcia."

ARCHER turned from the rail. It was a strange thing, that. He had never heard Garcia mention prayer before, but he did it naturally here. There was a spirit in the camp of San Martin that made prayer seem dignified: even the bells of churches sounded different.

Danning emerged from the shadows. His face was grave. "A decision has been reached, Colonel," he said. "I have already notified the others and they are proceeding to the administration chamber."

Archer shook his shoulders. The spell of Juan Garcia's warning was still on him. "They have probably decided to let us hunt Indians," he said, "and if we do not come back, they will not worry much."

Danning's expression was noncommittal. It was not for him to reveal the decision of the council. "Listen, old chap," he said, "why don't you take a commission with us regardless of what the others may do?"

The words were like an echo of what Garcia had said out of the shadows below the rail. Archer looked at him sharply. "Why?"

"Because you qualify. We need men like you. And O'Higgins likes you. He is a fine judge of men, General O'Higgins, and loyal to a man he likes."

"What about the men under my command?"

"We could not use them. They would not fit in—and we could not pay them. Bolivar in the North is having great

difficulties because he relies on mercenaries. When he has money they win battles: when he has none, they lose them."

"What would you think of me if I deserted the men I signed for this expedition?"

"Give them their choice; you, without pay, or Carrera and his gold."

"It would not be fair. They need a capable commander. My second died on the pampa. My new second is a green man."

"The world is a jungle. Each man looks out for himself."

"If that were true, you would not have an Army of the Andes."

Danning laughed. "*Touché!* You are right, of course. But I wish you were with us. You impress people—and, dammit—I like you!"

"Thanks. You stack up pretty high yourself."

They stopped and shook hands by mutual consent and Archer felt strangely moved. This beefy Englishman had offered friendship without display and he had been deeply understanding without indulging in long speeches. On all the things which a soldier might not discuss, he had been decently reticent.

The Brothers Carrera had just entered the big room. San Martin and O'Higgins were standing. There were no formalities this time. They took their seats at the table and San Martin looked at Carrera.

"We have decided to accept your valuable services, generously offered," he said. "In consideration of the size of your force, however, and the nature of your mission, we can offer you no more than the rank of colonel."

Carrera's mouth twitched at the corner. "I accept," he said.

"We can authorize one major, one captain and as many lieutenants as you deem necessary."

"My brother, Don Hernando, is my second-in-command."

"Then I presume the American officer who bore the rank of colonel in your volunteer forces will serve as captain in the Army of Chile?"

San Martin looked at Archer and it was a question addressed to him. Archer's anger was just below the surface, but his voice was perfectly controlled.

"I accept," he said.

"Stand, please, and be sworn."

San Martin himself set the example by rising, O'Higgins and Danning rose with him. Fray Luis Beltran advanced solemnly with the crucifix and the Bible. Starting with Señor Don José Miguel de Carrera, he put each man solemnly "in the sight of Almighty God" to the oath of an officer: to preserve and to defend the cause of the freedom of Chile even to the sacrifice of life itself, to loyalty and obedience to the constituted authorities and all superior officers.

It was a long and fearsome oath which the Franciscan administered with the solemnity of a sacrament. When Archer, last of the trio, had been sworn, San Martin saluted them. When his salute had been returned, he fixed his penetrating eyes upon Miguel Carrera.

"How soon can you start on your mission, Colonel?" he said.

"Two hours after dawn tomorrow."

"Very good. You will please remain with your second-in-command. I want to understand your plans."

It was Archer's dismissal. He saluted and wheeled. He had reached the veranda when Danning joined him. "You will return to the house?" he said.

"I must instruct my men first."

"Good. I will have a horse for you."

Danning stepped to the edge of the veranda and sent one of the guards for an officer of the cavalry company which was always present when San Martin was in the Administration Building. At a command from Danning the officer surrendered his horse to Archer.

"I will await you here," Danning said.

"Thank you."

ARCHER rode away and the Furies rode with him. The Carreras had given him curt treatment here. He had been a mere leader of mercenaries, neither consulted nor honored. In the end he had been stepped down rudely in rank: a soldier of the line made inferior in standing to a supply officer. Don Hernando had commanded the pack train across the pampa and he, Archer, had commanded cavalry.

Then there was Garcia. Carrera had sworn that his mission was legitimate and Archer had held him accountable for the man. Yet he had tried to have Garcia killed. It was sheer folly to trust Miguel Carrera farther, yet he was placing himself in a position where no alternative existed. He might have had higher rank, certainly no lower, in the Army of the Andes; but now he was a captain under two Carreras.

Miguel had been right when he said, "The one hundred and fifty men whom you command tie you to my service." No decent man could abandon a command dependent upon him, nor better his own fortunes at the certain sacrifice of his men's very rights. Without him to fight for them, his Americans would get little from the Carreras save the privilege of scattering their bones over the Cordilleras.

He rode up to the American encampment and was smartly challenged. The sentries were not only well set, but alert. He strode through an orderly camp to the tent of Greg Kelly, temporarily commanding.

The curly-headed Kentuckian was writing in a field book. Beside him was a bottle of brandy, unopened. He rose swiftly when Archer entered and he saw Archer's glance toward the bottle.

"Corked, sir. I have it standing guard there to remind me I'm in command."

Archer laughed. He had always had the idea that Kelly would do. "Keep it corked," he said. His features settled into grim lines. "And you are demoted anyway."

"Demoted?" Kelly turned pale. His captaincy had meant a lot to him.

"Right. So am I. You will be my first lieutenant. My own rank is captain, the Army of Chile."

Kelly breathed again. "You frightened me," he said. "I was none too sure that you'd made a wise choice in the first place. I was afraid you'd come around to the same thinking."

"Not yet. Keep convincing me." In short phrases he outlined the campaign plans ahead. Kelly's eyes gleamed. "Indians! The men will like that better than Spaniards."

"Well, they'll get them. Have everything ready to go an hour after dawn. That will give us an hour in the clear."

Archer went out and dropped down on the ground by the communal fire where yarns were being spun. There was no rank here: they were all Americans in a strange land, relaxed and entertaining one another. It renewed his faith in himself to be one with them for a half hour. When he left them the swagger was back in his walk and while he was still within the light range of the fire, he took the medal of the fool from his pocket and spun it. It landed with the grinning jester's face uppermost and the legend—*I have two sides, Power has only one.*

It was a good omen. Power was still single-sided and only fools looked back. He would ride his destiny wherever it took him and waste no regrets for what he might have had. It was the only way.

A half hour later he sat with Danning before the fireplace in Danning's home. Helen Danning had retired and he would not see her any more. Danning raised a glass of the white wine of Mendoza.

"To when we meet again," he said in Spanish.

Archer lifted his own glass and offered the inevitable reply. "In this world or the next."

CHAPTER X

THUNDER IN THE VALLEY

THE Army of Carrera traveled light into the hills. Most of the supplies necessary for the trek across the pampa were left in Mendoza and the pack train was reduced by half, with only thirty men and a lieutenant detailed to guard it. Don Hernando, with his new rank, became a line officer and led fifty men of the advance scouting group. Archer's force followed, with Don Miguel as commander of the rear guard.

Within two hours they left the vineyards and the cultivated fields of Mendoza behind them. Crossing the first low barrier ridge, they turned southward, paralleling the Cordilleras, through a bleak and desolate country of sand flats, bunch grass, sagebrush, mesquite

and cactus. It was December, the midsummer of the Argentine, and the heat blazed back from the desert. Men rode uncomfortably and fought stinging insects. At night, lizards and swift desert rodents scurried through the camp.

Because they were uncomfortable, the Americans sang. It helped.

On the third day Carrera rode up to confer with Archer. It was the first time that Archer had talked with him since the evening on which they had been commissioned in the Army of Free Chile. Sweat trickled down Don Miguel's thin face, but he wore a disarming smile.

"You feel hostile to me, *amigo?*" he said.

Archer grunted. "A lizard crawled in my bed last night. I liked him better."

"*Bueno.* We must always be frank. Men who share dangers together must be honest."

"That's right. I will take care of my share of the danger. Beyond that I do not believe in you. Satisfied?"

"Perfectly. Because your mind will change. My friend, I brought you here to fight for Chile because you are a good soldier; not because I liked your manners."

"Let us leave it that way."

"We will. Temporarily. But you will learn to believe in me when you look wide and to great distance. *Santissima!* You described yourself perfectly. You look at the lizard in your bed. If you but lifted your eyes, you would see a million stars. You would see the Sierra de Los Parmillos."

Carrera made a sweeping gesture to his right where the towering range rose skyward from the desert floor. "Me, I am perhaps unfair to the lizard. Maybe I step on him while I am looking at the stars and the mountains but, Amigo, I see the great things and the lizard must look out for himself."

"Very pretty."

"I think so. Some day you will see. Some day I will again be President of Chile, commander-in-chief of her Armies."

Archer looked at him sharply. "What about San Martin and O'Higgins?"

"O'Higgins served under me once. San Martin is a Porteno."

Archer shrugged. "You did not ride up here to tell me that."

"No. I did not. But remember it! I came to tell you that tomorrow we see fighting."

"Where?"

"There is a valley and beyond it a city on top of a huge rock. In that city rules the last great Cacique of the Araucanos. On the plains in the valley are half-breed gauchos and a lower class of Indian, but they are ruled from the rock."

Archer looked to his right, at the great mountain barrier that separated the Argentine from Chile. "We have come far south of the passes which San Martin plans to cross," he said.

"Of course. He worries about a few Indians who raid and steal because they have come to believe that where there is revolution there is no law. A thousand men could chase those few Indians and catch none. Me, I cut off the head of this snake and the tail dies."

"And this rock is the head?"

"The head of all Indian revolt, here and beyond the Cordilleras."

"What is your plan?"

"My brother draws the attack. He crosses the valley floor. You skirt it on the Sierra trail. I take the high road." Carrera was suddenly grim. "The lives of my brother and his men are in your hands. You must flank his attackers."

"And you?"

"I have one hundred and twenty men. I will flank the rock, but you must draw men away from it by the fury of your attack."

Archer nodded. This was not like Indian fighting in the States, but neither were these the same Indians. Most of the Indians in these plains and mountains had been conquered once; they were rebels with racial memories of past greatness and with a knowledge of warfare learned from their conquerors.

"Don Hernando has only fifty men," he said. "I have one hundred and fifty. How great are the odds?"

"I cannot tell. Perhaps two to one, but I do not believe that many. They are poorly armed."

"Pizarro managed with a few men. We'll take care of ourselves."

Carrera's smile came back with flashing brilliance. "I told you once that you are not Pizarro, *amigo,* but feel like Pizarro and all will be well. *Adios!*"

CARRERA spurred ahead to overtake his brother, his escort falling in behind him. Archer stared after him with mixed feelings. The man might be a scoundrel, but he had charm. It was hard to hate him and under his light talk, there was a certain pliable strength like the strength of a steel blade, bending to circumstance but still a weapon of power.

"And so we fight at last!"

The thought keyed him and made the heat more bearable. He sent Kelly down along the column to tell the men and there was a noticeable bracing in the troop. Monotony became anticipation. The men were more alert and in two hours a member of an advance scouting party sighted the first Indian: a lone brave on a pony who watched them from an off-the-trail elevation a half mile away. Archer detailed three men to go after him, but he vanished swiftly as soon as the men started in his direction.

Thereafter, at intervals through the afternoon, other Indians were seen, sometimes in groups of two or three but always at a distance. Archer sent several scouting parties out on his flank but none of them obtained contact and no large parties were sighted.

"We're goin' the right way for 'em. That's how they work up home and these don't act different." Taylor, now a sergeant, had led one of the patrols and he was making his report. "As long as we keep movin' to where they want us to go, they'll hang around our far edges just a-watchin' us like coyotes."

Archer nodded. "I believe you're right, Sergeant."

Lescano, his liaison officer who had accompanied Don Miguel to the advance party of Don Hernando came back at sundown with a rough map and a report.

"Major Carrera proposes to meet with men from the rock," he said, "and propose a peaceful conference, but he does not trust these Indians who have turned bad and who are in conspiracy against all authority."

Archer studied the map. Don Hernando had marked a high trail which overlooked the valley as a point of vantage from which his own conference with native spokesmen in the valley below might be watched. Archer frowned and put it away.

He did not like the appearance of things. The Carreras knew too much and he knew too little. He had not been included in the conference with San Martin and O'Higgins so he did not know what plan of campaign had been ordered or outlined; but the Carreras had not hesitated in their objective from the start. They had come straight to the battleground of tomorrow, they knew the terrain and they were sure of fighting.

"And Carrera wanted this assignment rather than a post in the Army of the Andes. Why?"

Archer's mind came back to that question again and again, but he found no answer to it. With the coming of dark, he pitched camp on the plains and set his sentries. Despite the heat of the day, there was a sharp edge to the night wind and wood was gathered for fires. There was tension in the camp, a tendency to talk too loudly or too low. The night sounds, too, were intensified and took on a new meaning.

Panthers had screamed in the Sierras on other nights and owls had hooted, but tonight the old hands who had campaigned along the Missouri interpreted each hoot and howl and buzz of the night as Indian signals. They told yarns about similar nights when creeping rings of red warriors closed steadily in to rise suddenly with howls that would wake the dead, weapons in their hands and murder in their hearts.

In his own tent Archer was in that mood of half exultation, half melancholy that comes over imaginative fighting men on the eve of battle. One face floated constantly before him, framed in soft golden hair, mocking him out of clear blue eyes. Helen Danning! Another man's wife, a man who had proved himself a friend. The very hopelessness of dreaming about Helen Danning fitted

into his mood. He had been in Baltimore scores of times before she met Danning. If he had met her first?

He tried to banish the thought, tried to remember the slender, dark beauty of Ysabel Rodriguez. The vision of the girl in Buenos Aires was dim, eclipsed by a later glory, and he could not call her back. Outside the fires were burning low and talk had ceased. Somewhere in the mystery of the night, Indian scouts reported and Indian strategists conferred. Tomorrow the blood would flow. Tomorrow!

ARCHER awakened with the stirring of the camp and men were grimly checking their weapons. Horses were examined carefully for saddle sores or cuts; then they were mounted again and on the trail.

Their route swung in toward the foothills and the way was greener. There were slopes green with trees and a narrow trail that lent itself to ambush. Small scouting parties beat the brush but today there was not even the occasional Indian.

Two hours brought them to a narrow steep-flanked canyon where huge outcroppings of red and purple rock hid the tortuous trail and it was here that the first blood flowed.

Lieutenant Dunne, leading the advance party of ten men, ran into a rain of arrows at the bend of the trail. Two of his men fell and he fired his pistol as a signal to Archer, at the same time giving the order to dismount, rifles at ready.

At the first crack of a firearm, Archer's two wing scouting parties closed in and Archer, dismounting a dozen riflemen, sent them into the brush while he put his own party to the gallop and thundered down the trail. Ahead of him a scattered volley of musketry sounded and as he swept around the bend of the trail, he saw Dunne's men fighting a holding action from the shelter of trees and boulders to the right. The Indians above them, on higher ground, were peppering them with arrows.

An arrow sang past Archer's ear as he came into the open, but then the expected happened.

The closing wings of scouts and the party of dismounted riflemen sighted the ambush position and opened fire. The Indians, having lost the advantage of position, abandoned the fight. With the sure speed of men born to the saddle, they mounted and raced down a paralyzingly steep slope for the trail, riding low on the necks of their ponies and finding safe passage through the trees where, seemingly, no passage existed.

Archer, leading his own men, put spurs to his own animal and raced to the interception. At this speed a flintlock pistol was all but useless, so he left his in his belt, riding with drawn saber held low. Ahead of him, the Indian ponies burst from the screening trees. One! Three! A half dozen! They seemed to bounce as they hit the narrow trail, turning on the bounce and streaking southward. Seven! Then there was one who had no time to get away.

Archer had the swift flash of dun colored pony, feathered head-dress and a face that seemed to be mostly teeth; then a vicious curved war club waved above his head and he put his shoulder behind the thrust of his saber. He felt the shock of the thrust run up his arm and the scream of the Indian filled the canyon. His mount turned against the impact of the plunging pony and then he felt himself wrenched from the saddle by his saber grip as the Indian's body plunged to the road.

Hooves pounded by and there was a confusion of screaming horses and yelling men as the Indians plummeted to the trail and the swift cavalry got in among them. Archer rolled to the side of the trail and wrenched at his blade which had become locked in the ribs of the man he had slain. The eyes of the Indian stared sightlessly up at him from a broad, vicious face that was still contorted in the madness of combat. The man's lips were thick, his forehead narrow and his lower jaw fringed with a black, wiry beard.

Archer freed his blade and wiped it on the grass. He rose to one knee and his stomach felt shaky. The thunder of charge and conflict had died, no more Indians rocketed down the slope and the various groups of his command were re-

assembling. Taylor, who had commanded the dismounted riflemen, came up beside him.

"Are you hurt, sir?"

"No. Not at all." Archer fought to control the nausea which so often follows a swift charge and kill. He picked up the war club; a heavy piece of wood about five feet long and bent into an elbow for the last quarter of its length. "Nasty weapon," he said.

"It is that. Fair take a man's head from his shoulders, it would. And did you notice, sir, these Indians down here grow beards?"

"I noticed that."

Archer sheathed his weapon and checked with his officers. The fight had been short and savage, the American casualties light. One of Dunne's men, caught in the first surprise, had received an arrow through his throat and had left his life on the trail. Two other men had received flesh wounds from arrows and one had received a nasty graze from a war club. There were eleven Indians known to be dead and some possible hits among those fired upon in the thick brush.

Archer halved his force and left Kelly to protect a burying detail for the man who had fallen. The Indians could take care of their own dead. Archer pushed on.

It was a steadying thing, once it was over, to have had a skirmish. The men were better for it. Archer's jaw was set grimly.

The Indians had drawn first blood. That blood had been avenged, but let them look out! He had brought that man a long way to die.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROCK

THE trail climbed out of the canyon and suddenly emerged from brackets of rock in a scimitar sweep that revealed the full, free curve of the valley; rolling land like the pampa itself with occasional mound-like humps and one dark winding line of trees that marked a watercourse. At the far end of the valley the guarding sierras closed in again and there was "The Rock."

It was like an inverted pyramid standing on its apex and several hundred feet high. Originally, it seemed, it had been part of the larger butte that thrust itself into the valley from the inner ring of the sierras, but even from a distance Archer could see the sharp, clean cleft that set the rock apart: so clean that it might have been made by the saber of some ancient god.

In the valley itself, men and animals were dwarfed by the immensity around them. The horsemen of Don Hernando were advancing at a walk, columns of fours in echelon while another party of horsemen moved at a gallop toward the rock. The conference, then, was over and the messengers were returning to their chief with Don Hernando's proposal.

Over the floor of the valley there were countless other horsemen, ostensibly rounding up the many herds of cattle, moving them around and—to the eyes of an observer in Archer's vantage spot—drawing a ring around the small body of cavalry.

Upon Archer and the soundness of his strategy, the lives of those fifty men depended, and he paid reluctant tribute to the courage of the Carreras. Whatever else they might be, they were not cowards. His eyes swept westward. Somewhere out there, Don Miguel was advancing toward the butte from which the rock was severed. It would take forced marches to make it. Again he marveled at the certain knowledge of the terrain that the Carreras exhibited.

His own strategy had been only roughly outlined. He must parallel the march of Don Hernando, taking advantage of the screening trees on the west side of the valley where the trail followed a small and turbulent river. He frowned over that. Concealment was scarcely possible when his troop had been already scouted and when they could only enter the valley after being sky-lined on this high trail. Still! There was merit in the flanking maneuver rather than a bold advance across the valley floor.

He estimated the number of potentially hostile horsemen in the valley.

There were, perhaps, one hundred, no more than a hundred and twenty-five. Since they must know that Carrera's force was backed by a stronger force and since keen eyes would estimate that party's strength, Carrera would hardly be attacked until he had approached the rock. It was the logical place for Indian reinforcements to be.

"They will attack him, draw me in and then pour down," he said. "But if they come from the rock itself!"

The possibilities in that excited him. As the situation stood, the rock loomed as an impregnable fortress capable of being held by a few men against many. Certainly it was a problem beyond the scope of cavalry. However—

He passed his orders back and swept around the scimitar curve to the west. Here the trail dipped down again behind the trees, a firm much-traveled trail beside the river. He threw scouting parties out along his flanks and proceeded at a canter. One party of scouts was detailed to the task of keeping Don Hernando's party in sight until Archer with the main body of the troop could reach a point of vantage commanding a view of the plain before the rock. He traveled faster than Don Hernando and his line was not exactly parallel to the other's. It was more like the opposing side of an isosceles triangle. In an hour he drew rein where the river bent westward and the trees eastward toward the plain were thin. Here he dismounted his men and took a point of vantage on a forked boulder that gave him a view of the plain.

THE view was not as good here as it had been from higher ground but Archer could see Don Hernando's troop still advancing at a walk through the dust that rolled across the plain from the herds of cattle that had been herded onto the higher, rockier rim land where the grass was thin.

The shadow of the rock fell across the pampa just ahead of the slowly advancing Chilenos. Archer scribbled a hasty message to Kelly on a dispatch sheet and sent it back by courier.

"Come into the pampa on the charge when you hear the first shot."

He slid down from the boulder then and gave the order to mount. He had a sense of desperate urgency. The burying detail would not delay Kelly long. The second troop would be somewhere close. It would not be long until they were needed. He had seen significance in the movements of the cattle, design in the actions of the men herding them.

Abandoning concealment, he led his men through the screen. The pampa spread before them and even as the Americans emerged from cover a rolling thunder of drums sounded on the rock. The Indian and half-Indian gauchos on the plains answered the drums with loud shouts. Whips cracked sharply and the cattle started to move.

Thunder rolled back to thunder like an echo as the suddenly stampeded cattle started to converge from three directions upon the troop of Don Hernando. The pound of hooves merged into the beat of drums and then pistols cracked.

Don Hernando's men swung into a trot and from a trot to a gallop. They rode low on the necks of their horses and they fired into the faces of the onrushing cattle. They were racing toward the rock but in spite of all they could do to turn them, some of the cattle got in among the horsemen and scattered the formation. From the flanks of the herd, the gauchos charged.

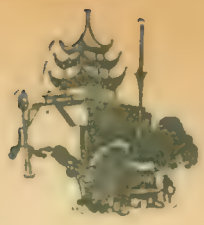
They were swinging their *boleadoras* in great circles around their heads, weighted ropes that sang out into taut lines, snapping men out of the saddle or winding around the legs of horses.

Archer, standing in the stirrups, saw men and horses go down, then he was feeling the mad fury of the charge, full out across the plain, behind the maddened cattle and at nearly right angles to Don Hernando's line of flight.

A *boleadora* whistled toward him and he made a lucky thrust with his saber at the moment that the line tautened. His arm felt momentarily numb but the missile, severed from the line, flew off into space instead of winding about him; then he was into a group of horsemen, his saber slashing viciously.

(To be concluded)

THE CAMP-FIRE



Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

BERT SHURTLEFF, whose "Old Gus" stories you will recall back in '37 and '38, sends us the following "with apologies to Kipling." He says, "I wrote it after reading that Mandalay had been bombed into a fire-charred ruin with thousands of civilian bodies everywhere and the pagoda utterly smashed."

MANDALAY (1942)

Now there's no Moulmein Pagoda where I lazed beside the sea,
An' the Burma girl's a stinkin' corp' who used to wait for me,
For the planes fly o'er the palm trees, an' the smokin' ruins say,
"Come you back, you British soldier, come you back to Mandalay;
Shoot your way to Mandalay
Where the Japs are tops today.
Can't you see them strut an' swagger from Rangoon to Mandalay?"
On the road to Mandalay
Where the swoopin' Zeros play
An' the Japs brought up their thunder out o' China 'crost the bay.

'Er petticoat tore off 'er, an' 'er little face gone green.
With 'er poor breasts burned to cinders —an' the bay'net jabs between.
For I seed 'er last a-smokin' like a whackin' big cheroot,
Just a 'uddlin' 'orror by the way for scornful Japs to boot.
Bloomin' Japs what thirst for blood,
Damning Christ an' 'er Gawd Budd—
But we'll make them damn their idols once we've armed an' turned an' stood.

Oh, the smoke was on the rice fields an' the sun was dippin' low
When we double-timed from Burma, 'cause we really 'ad to go,
For the Japs had come a-snoopin' with their bloody gall and cheek,
An' they'd spied the little steamers and the whackin' pile o' teak
An' the el'phants pilin' teak,
Wealth of Inja 'long the creek,
An' their bombs come thick and 'eavy 'til my 'ead 'ummed for a week.

But the fire an' 'ell's be'ind me; I'm in Inja safe away,
But I'm waitin' tanks to take me o'er the 'ills to Mandalay,
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in Inja 'ow they burned them temple bells
An' my ears is ringin'—ringin' so's I can't 'eed nothin' else—
No, I won't 'eed nothin' else
But them bombs an' burnin' smells
Where the bursts tore down the palm trees an' silenced temple bells.

I am sick o' settin' waitin' for the planes an' tanks to come,
An' my ears is really 'ungry for them Yankee motors' 'um.
Though I reads of fifty conquests, an' the way we bombs the Reich,
There is just one battle for me, an' I'm waitin' 'ere to strike.
Little grubby yellow thief
With the grinnin' old buck teeth,
For 'e thought we couldn't take it, but we'll change 'is fool belief.

'Old me out here East of Suez where a man can do his worst
On the little yaller monkey men—it's for their blood I thirst;
For those melted bells are callin', an' the corpses by the way,
An' the ruined old pagoda—so *we're off to Mandalay.*
On the road to Mandalay
Where the Yankee planes will play,
They'll be Japs wot 'unts for cover when we roar o'er Mandalay.
On the road to Mandalay.
God, 'urry on the day
When the Yanks will 'elp us drown their sun—*far out in China Bay!*

Skip the apologies, Bert. We've read innumerable parodies and imitations of "the old master" and so far as we're concerned "Mandalay (1942)" has 'em all beat. Come again with more of the same!

(Continued on page 118)

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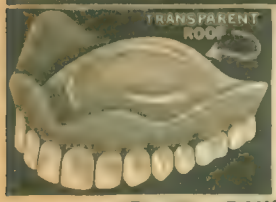

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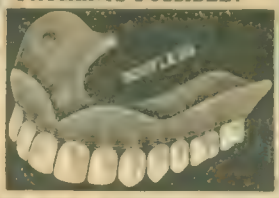

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(Continued from page 116)

ROLLAND LYNCH makes his first appearance on our contents page this issue with "Seasoned in Sail" and introduces himself briefly while drying some of the salt water out of his clothes at the *Camp-Fire*—

I saw my first ocean when I was fourteen and have lived and breathed salt water ever since.

Of course, despite all my merchant service and powerboating, you can tell by "Seasoned in Sail" that I'm partial to canvas. In fact, I'm happier with a log, a piece of stair rail and a bed sheet than I could ever be with a de luxe cabin cruiser. There is nothing like the creak of boom and gaff, and wind-whine in the rigging, as you sail along with decks aslant to a freshening breeze.

And I truly believe that if a man wants to be a seaman, a real one, he should know sail. If he does he can go aboard anything that floats and be at home. Just like old Hildreth in the story.

My early sailing days on small craft came in handy when I went merchant to see what was "over the rim." The old Dollar Line, Bull Line, Luckenbach, etc. I put about 250,000 miles of deep water under me before I quit; that is quick merchant sailing. I kept on in sail, most of it racing. The most beautiful sight in the world is a well trained crew breaking out the balooner at the windward buoy for a free run to the finish line; but there I go again. . . .

My duties at the present time, of course, come under the heading of military secrets, but I hope someday to write about them. Until then, or when I meet you again in these pages, thanks for the warmth of your fire and may you always enjoy fair winds.

H. G. RUSSELL is another recruit to the ranks of our Writers' Brigade this month. By a peculiar coincidence his article about the Confederate Marine Corps appears just in time to celebrate the 167th anniversary of the U. S. Marine Corps. November 10th is the leathernecks' birthday. Lieutenant Russell—he expects to be back on active duty by the time his article is published—steps forward to introduce himself—

I was born in Boston in the shadow of historic monuments on April 23, 1902, sharing birthday honors with Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Shirley Temple. My mother had been a Broadway actress, descended from Nova Scotian and Newfoundland mariners; my father a theatrical manager and publicity man originally from Maryland. I graduated from Boston University and later took a master's degree there after working my way by selling, employment as janitor, night watchman, and teaching. Between high school and college was draftsman in a munition plant near end of World War I.

Have taught Finns and Portuguese in Massachusetts; Hungarians, Italians, and Poles in Connecticut; and Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Latin Americans in California. Taught English, geography, current events, economics and business subjects in high schools and business schools in Gloucester, Massachusetts, Hartford, Connecticut, and San Francisco. Recently, a professor of advertising and director of publicity in a West Coast college. Acquired several additional degrees in spare time, including an honorary doctorate.

Did feature article writing for Boston and Hartford papers, military reporting, trade and professional journal articles, and publicity which has appeared in newspapers from Maine to Hawaii. Also worked as process server, collector, insurance agent, and bookkeeper in Reno, Nevada, where I was attached as a lieutenant to 40th Military Police Company. Other military experience include R. O. T. C., and duty in the Hartford flood emergency with the Governor's Foot Guard, second oldest militia unit in the United States. I hold a lieutenant's commission at present in the Army Reserve and expect active service when completely convalescent from recent illness. Have also done editing and ghost writing for a textbook publisher.

This will be my first appearance in a national fiction magazine. There is no publication in which I would rather make my debut than in ADVENTURE and I'm trying to feel as humble as a recruit should feel among veterans.

"Devil Dogs of Dixie" in slightly expanded form will become a chapter in Lieutenant Russell's forthcoming book, "The Story of the Confederate Navy." We'll keep you posted on publication date of the volume. We asked the author to answer an *Ask Adventure* letter about the Confederate Marines and in that department, on Pg. 6 of this issue, is

(Continued on page 120)

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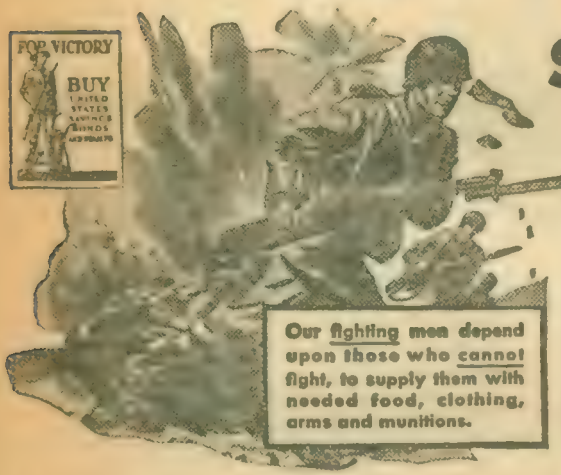
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(Continued from page 118)

some interesting additional information on the Corps.

MR. STEPHEN V. GRANCSAY, Curator of Arms and Armor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, N. Y., sends us the following note which we are glad to include here in *Camp-Fire*—

A monograph on American powder horns of the Colonial, Revolutionary War, and War of 1812 periods is in preparation and is shortly to be sent to press. In this monograph will be included a list of over a thousand powder horns bearing the names of the original owners, dates, rhymes, maps, or other significant inscriptions.

The thought occurred to me that if it were possible to insert a note about the compilation of this list in *Adventure* some of your readers might be willing to send me descriptions of American powder horns which are known to them. It is the cow and ox horns, and not the metal flasks, in which I am interested. Also, I am interested only in the engraved horns.

If it would be possible to place a brief note in *Adventure*, I would be very grateful to you.

FROM time to time we receive requests—which, unfortunately, we are usually unable to fulfill—for back issues of *Adventure*. Unless the copies required are fairly recent ones the chances are about a million to one that we don't have any on hand. Contrariwise, we occasionally learn of old-time readers who have files of our magazine which, for some reason or other they are willing to dispose of. We are glad to bring these folk together whenever possible here in *Camp-Fire*. For example—

*

Mrs. Sally Mundy of 2859½ Sunset Pl., Los Angeles, Cal., wants a copy of the Nov. 10, 1922 issue in which Talbot Mundy's story "The Gray Mahatma" appeared.

*

Miss Lelia Mathews of 1000 Newell St., Utica, N. Y., has files of the magazine dating back to 1912 which she would like to sell.

*

Leonard H. Urquhart of 829 Dennistoon ave., Roanoke, Va., wants to sell his

(Continued on page 127)

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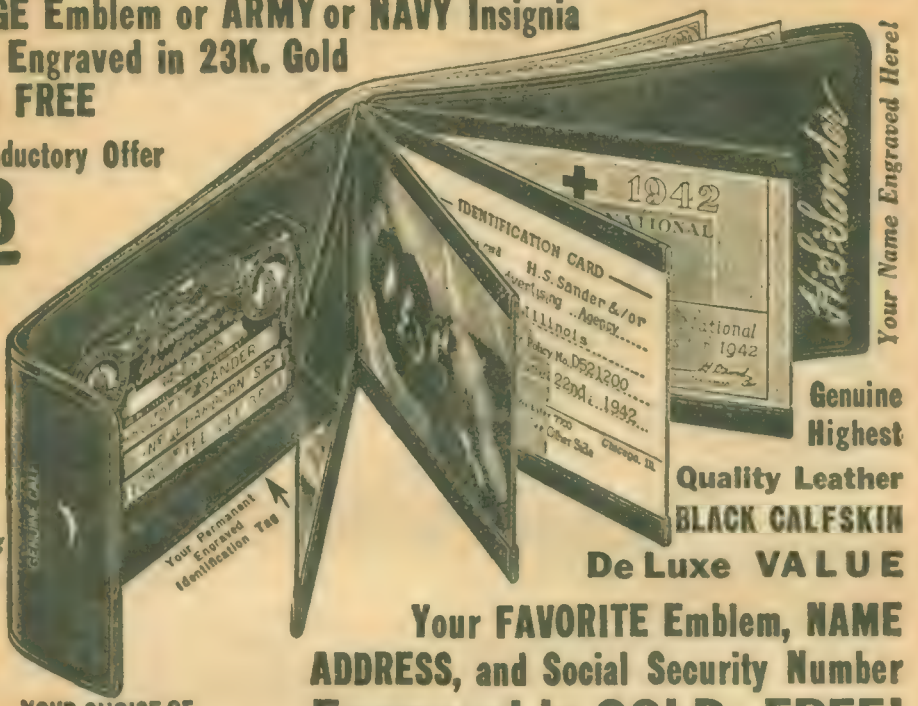

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Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are now engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices which have been set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men have consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work is of secondary importance to their official duties. This is as it should be, so when you don't receive answers to queries as promptly as you have in the past please be patient. And remember that foreign mails are slow and uncertain these days, many curtailed drastically. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure*.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Boxing—LIEUT. COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, 1619 Mass. Ave. N.W., Wash., D. C.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, care of *Adventure*.

Fencing—LIEUT. COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, 1619 Mass. Ave., N.W., Wash., D. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing: *salt water, bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure*.

Globe-trotting and vagabonding — ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure*.

Health Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, *care of Adventure*.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 70 Colonial Sq., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

★Skiing and Snowshoeing — W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec, Can.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure*.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1. Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, New York City.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology—*American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders* — MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Forestry: *in the United States, national forests of the Rock Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure*.

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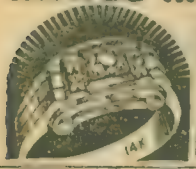

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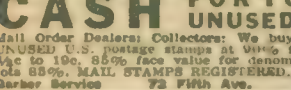

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Chas. Powell (Paul), supposed to be in or near Monroe, Fla., and last heard from in 1924 or '26, please communicate with Fred C. Powell, Box 1241, Reno, Nev.

Norman Rankin, 19, born in Glasgow, Scotland, resided in Brooklyn, N. Y., until 1934, last heard from at N. 3rd St., Philadelphia, Pa. Any information would be appreciated by Norman Bersin, Sea. 2/cl., U.S.N., c/o *Adventure*.

Anyone who knew William Henry Davis in Piedmont, Mo., in the years 1898-1900, please write to his son, Cecil G. Davis, 4522 Corliss St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Is General R. L. Hearn (Lo Sze Han), formerly Commander-in-Chief of Manchurian Irregulars of Chang Tso Lin alive? Who knows? Write Kaye Hyde, Box 1731, San Francisco, Cal.

Would like to get in touch with Dave Kelly Roberts. He was with the New Orleans *Daily States* in 1916-17. I think he went to Jacksonville, Fla. Write Harry Williams, 2029 Main St., Kansas City, Mo.

I would like to get in touch with Buck Rumkin, a young man in his twenties, last heard of in San Francisco, Calif., over two years ago. If this man, or anyone who knows of his whereabouts would write to his old friend on the MJ Ranch, it would be greatly appreciated. Bill Jewell, Foreman MJ Ranch, Buffalo Creek, British Columbia, Can.

(Continued on page 129)

(Continued from page 120)

Adventure collection dating from 1925 to the present. The series is complete with the exception of Sept. 15 and Oct. 1, '28 and April, May, June and Oct., '32.

*

Harry Frohm, 248 Lincoln St., Wilkes-Barre, Pa., has a rather complete file dating from 1914 through 1931 which he would like to dispose of.

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THAT "Old-Timers' Issue" we've been threatening you with is still tentatively scheduled for February. Last month we told you we'd corraled Tut and hog-tied him to his typewriter table long enough to let him write us a yarn. We've rounded up a half dozen more hombres since then and things seem to be shaping up for a real parade of talent. Gouverneur Morris, Charles Tenney Jackson, Allan Vaughan Elston, Frank Richardson Pierce, Sidney Herschel Small, Georges Surdez are all under lock and key in the bunkhouse and more top hands are riding in every day. We'll try to have the complete roster ready to announce here and in *The Trail Ahead* next month.—K.S.W.

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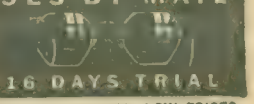

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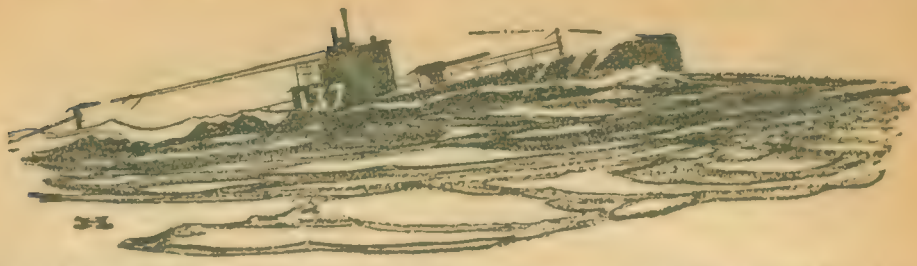
THE TRAIL AHEAD



It was the bombing of Cavite that brought that damn black cat on board the *Perch*. We'd been a lucky submarine till then. . . . That's the way Commander Charles T. S. Gladden's—

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"SOMETHING TO SHOOT AT"

—begins, to the accompaniment of wailing sirens and the crack of a sentry's salvaged Springfield. The author wears three campaign ribbons and the Order of the Purple Heart and knows what he's writing about.

It was all very well for the Old Man to declare he would never give up the ship. That wasn't the question. The ship was giving up Captain Scudder. You could feel her going with your ankles. . . . That's the opening of Richard Howells Watkins'

"A SHIFT OF CARGO"

—but you won't feel like abandoning the *Alice Clissold*, as the mate did, in mid-story. The author of innumerable fine yarns of the sea spins us another—of the freighters that run unconvoyed to the Caribbean.

Bill Gulick gives us "Cimmaron Crossing," another gripping tale of the men who work hot wire; Vinson Brown & Theodore O. Zschokke collaborate in "Black Army," an amazing story of the Central American jungles; George Cory Franklin tells about a blue mule that went AWOL in a hilarious army interlude; William E. Barrett concludes his stirring "To the Last Man"—and there will be the usual fact features and special departments.

We've given you a few of the opening guns above, but in this great first issue of 1943 FROM THE FIRST WORD TO THE LAST THERE'S NOT A SENTENCE THAT ISN'T PACKED WITH THRILLS!

On Sale December 9th

(Continued from page 126)

Would like very much to locate my brother, Thomas Merchant Ross, from whom I have not heard since 1926. He left home near Childress, Texas, and was last heard from a few days later in Red Buff, California. In his letter he talked of going to Oregon. He would now be about 31 years old. He had a ruddy complexion, black hair and part of one front tooth missing. Anyone knowing his present whereabouts, please communicate with his brother, Private Allen R. Ross, care *Adventure*, or his sister, Mrs. Alice Ross Archer, 1709 Mentor St., Dallas, Tex.

I would like to locate Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Franklin. Their last known whereabouts was in the Englewood district, close to Halsted St., Chicago, Ill., about ten years ago. They may have journeyed to Ontario—any information will be appreciated by their old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Powell, 203 Buttrey St., Niagara Falls, Ontario, Can.

Would like to hear from my brother, Charles W. Leach Lewis, generally called Charlie. He left Columbus, Ohio, in 1898 for Dallas, Texas. Had light hair, blue eyes; was painter, paper hanger and lather, also cook. Would be about 67 or 68 years old now. N. F. Leach Talbott, 916 Cleveland Ave., Columbus, Ohio.

ASK ADVENTURE

(Continued from page 8)

of the Confederate Navy held dual commissions, Commander Wood being both a commander in the navy and a brigadier general in the army. But the marines being both soldier and sailor held but the one commission, and promotion was naturally limited by the small size of the corps. Yet, Confederate Marine officers willingly relinquished higher ranks in the Confederate Army to take a post in the marines. *Esprit de corps* was very evident in the Confederate States Marine Corps. The marines, of course, did not win the appellation "Devil Dogs" until the World War, when the Germans conferred this title on them on account of their hard fighting qualities. Whether it was intended as a compliment or not, I believe the marines always so regarded it. I used this title in my story because I am convinced that the Confederate Marines displayed the same sterling qualities and were in every sense of the word fighting American Marines.

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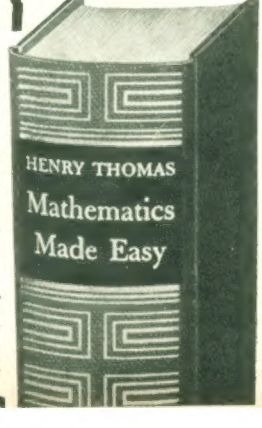

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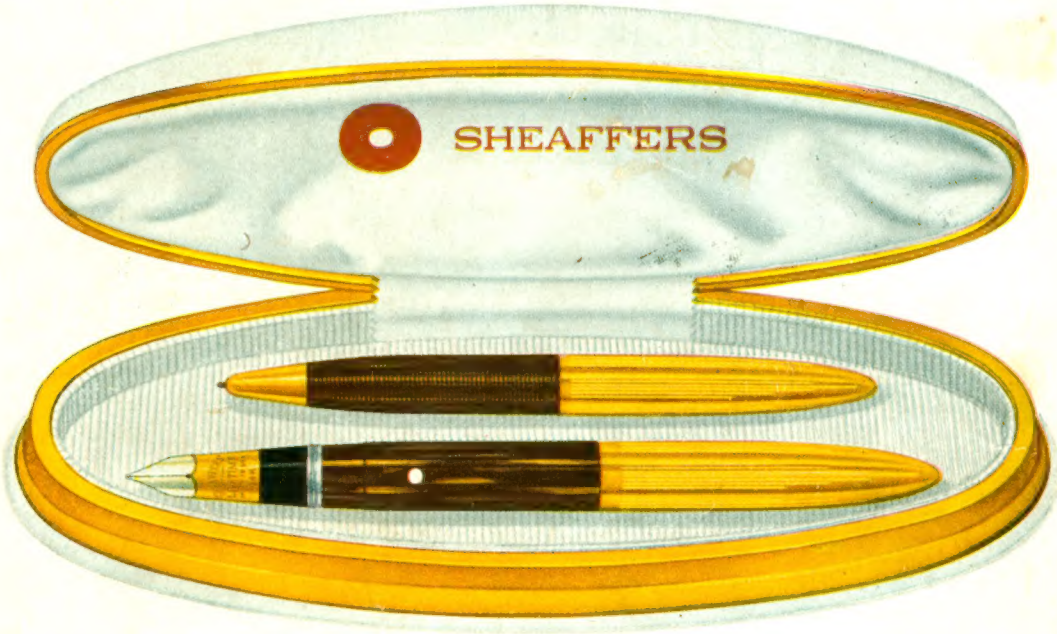

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